



BC Conservation Officer Service

Access Management Compliance and Enforcement Program (AMCEP) 2020 Report

*Compiled by Conservation Officer Patricia Burley
May 15-November 15, 2020*



Sheep Mountain MVCA

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Introduction

In 2009 the East Kootenay Regional District (RDEK) Electoral Area A, in partnership with the BC Conservation Officer Service (BCCOS), initiated the Access Management Compliance and Enforcement Program (AMCEP). The AMCEP is dedicated to public education and enforcement of Motor Vehicle Closed Areas (MVCA), formally known as Access Management Areas (AMAs), located within the Regional District of East Kootenay's (RDEK) Electoral Area A. MVCAs are designated and regulated under the BC Wildlife Act. The RDEK Electoral Area A geographically encompasses 463,917 Ha (not including the municipalities). The RDEK Electoral Area A currently holds 14 MVCAs, 19 BC Recreation Sites and Trails and 4 Motor Vehicle Hunting Closed Areas (used to be known as VAHCs).

The following results illustrate the total effort spent by the AMCEP appointed CO Access Guardian and other CO's in each MVCA within the RDEK Electoral Area A from May 15th to November 15th 2020. This report also includes a summary of additional duties completed by the Access Guardian. Other duties comprised of; environmental protection, fish and wildlife enforcement, public safety, human wildlife conflict management, public presentations, stakeholder meetings, fund raising and AMA related administration.

Maps

To reduce this document size, MVCA maps have not been included in this report. If required, maps of individual MVCAs are available on the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy website: www.env.gov.bc.ca/kootenay/eco/accessmaps.htm

As per the Letter of Agreement, the Access Guardian provided monthly AMCEP Reports to the RDEK for review. The Final Reports from 2012-2015, 2017-2019 are now available for the public to view and read at the following website: www.env.gov.bc.ca/kootenay/eco/accessmaps.htm

For further detailed information please refer to 2019 results.

Contact Information

Questions and concerns can be forwarded to Conservation Officer Burley.

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2020 Results

Table 1: Overall results of the 2020 AMCEP.

Total number of patrols and time spent within each MVCA was recorded along with the number of persons contacted, number of charges, warnings and advice delivered.

Motor Vehicle Closed Areas (MVCAs) Patrols	*Officer Presence			Officer Action			
	Patrols Conducted	Hours on Site	Contacts Made	Access Charges	Access Warnings	Advice Provided	Other Violations
Alexander Creek	28	68.25	133	1	4	107	2
Barnes Lake	2	2.75	18	1	0	6	0
Chauncey Todhunter	12	22.5	22	0	1	7	0
Corbin	25	46.65	94	0	0	20	4
East Flathead	13	80	65	1	0	7	4
Galton Range	12	41.25	106	0	3	19	11
Grave Prairie	35	56	121	0	0	42	3
Sheep	38	53	54	0	2	3	1
Upper Elk Valley	8	22.75	89	0	0	23	2
Upper Flathead	6	30	27	0	0	17	1
Upper Wigwam	7	8.75	12	0	0	0	0
Weigert Creek	2	3	0	0	0	0	0
Wigwam Flats	25	75.2	105	3	5	16	5
	213	510.1	846	6	15	267	33

Table 2: Overall outreach results provided to the public for the 2020 AMCEP.

Outreach & Activities Outside MVCA Boundaries	# of Events	Time spent (hrs)	Contacts Made	Access Charges	Access Warnings	Advice Provided	Other Violations
Committee Groups	1	4	3	0	0	0	0
Community Clubs	2	5	40	0	0	15	0
Municipality Talk	1	3	40	0	0	40	0
School Talk	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Program Development	10	14	1	0	0	1	0
Meeting Prep	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Phone & Curb-side Education	2	2.25	1	0	0	2	0
Investigation not in AMA	11	26.5	4	0	1	0	7
Seasonal Motor Vehicle for Hunting Closed Areas (V.A.C.)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rec Sites & Trails	2	17	4	0	0	0	1
	29	71.75	93	0	1	58	8

Table 3: Estimated time spent travelling to various MVCAs.

Travel time calculated by multiplying travel distance by the number of patrols conducted. (ex: Alexander Creek: Travel distance (2) x Patrols (6) = 12 hrs. of travel time (round trip). This is time over and above time spent in the MVCA.

MVCAs	Round Trip Travel (hrs)	# of Patrols	Officer Travel Time (hrs)
Alexander Creek	2	28	56
Barnes Lake	3	2	6
Chauncey Todhunter	2.6	12	31.2
Corbin	1.34	25	33.5
East Flathead	4	13	52
Galton Range	2	12	24
Grave Prairie	1.5	35	52.5
Sheep	1	38	38
Upper Elk Valley	3	8	24
Upper Flathead	2	6	12
Upper Wigwam	2	7	14
Weigert Creek	1.66	2	3.32
Wigwam Flats	0.84	25	21
Total:			367.52

Table 4: Summary of 2020 statistics.

Filtered numbers are for the months of Nov-Dec.

Statistics	Total	Filtered
(hrs)	581.85	45.7
Contacts	939	124
Charges	6	0
Warnings	16	1
Advice Provided	325	0
Other Violations	41	11

- It should be noted that Officer Presence is calculated as the time Officer(s) were physically present in a MVCA and the outreach time provided for presentations, it does not account for travel to or from the areas.
- People who are provided advice are those defined as being encountered by a CO and discussing specific MVCA facts and requirements for which the person in question was previously unaware. It should be noted that the AMCEP and general MVCA facts are discussed with more than 60% of contacts.

- The above tables include the time spent on the preparation of the slide show presentation, Outdoor Access Guide, follow up paperwork, media articles, brochures, MVCA enforcement investigation time and phone conversations with questions regarding MVCAs.
- Some MVCAs are patrolled more than others. The reason for this is that the COS responds to the areas with the most complaints and non-compliance. When time permits the Access Guardian/COs try to patrol areas that are remote and haven't been inspected for some time.
- In 2020 the AMCEP conducted **213** patrols within the Electoral Area "A" MVCAs. The patrols were completed primarily by the Access Guardian. On occasion other COS staff from the East Kootenay Zone was involved with the patrols.
- Officers spent **510** hours patrolling within the MVCA boundaries alone. In addition to these patrols **239.02** hours were spent on travel. An additional **71.75** hours were spent providing education to the public and completing investigations. Patrols conducted within the MVCA boundaries were completed by truck, ATV, snowmobile and foot.
- In 2020 a total of **47** MVCA WLA files were investigated by the East Kootenay COS in Electoral Area A. These violations involved vehicles operating within the boundaries of the MVCAs.
- Other violations that are commonly found while in the MVCA's are; loaded firearms, improper documentation (hunting/fishing licences), hunting out of season, fishing during closed time, illegal possession of wildlife/fish, hunting/fishing without a licence, illegal guiding, fishing with prohibited gear/bait, open liquor etc.
- A total of **949.37** hours was committed to the 2020 program.

Chart and Summary from 2011-2020

	2011 (Aug - Oct)	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Patrols Conducted	65	123	146	170	148		131	154	132	213
Number of Events	5	32	82	92	48		47	54	64	29
Hours on Site	258.06	524.5	549	518.5	630		391.5	413	404.2	581.85
Hours on Events (presentations and Investigations)	7	110.25	284.75	290.5	159		103.25	146	252.5	71.75
Advice Provided	61	951	1717	1544	578		742	611	489	325
Contacts Made	441	1308	32	40	1113		828	1082	582	939
Access Warning Tickets	11	24	15	20	8		10	10	17	16
Access Violation Tickets	6	7	15	20	13		6	10	2	6
Other Violation Tickets	8	42	31	23	28		14	31	50	41
Travel Time (to/from AMA)	62.13	135.93	135.64	153.64	143.05		119.25	254.12	252.5	581.85

Table 5: Summary of statistics of the AMCEP results from 2011 to 2015 and 2017-2020. The program was on hold for 2016.

- Since the AMCEP started in August of 2011 the results of the program have been growing in success.
- The total number of Report All Polluters and Poachers (RAPP) complaints regarding MVCA violations has increased since the introduction of the AMCEP in 2011. Most of the complaints reported to the Conservation Officer Service have resulted in convictions.
- More community groups have requested the Access Guardian to provide MVCA presentations. In addition to the community group the Access Guardian also provides information to the general public and outdoor enthusiasts on a regular basis.

Motor Vehicle Closed Areas

Alexander Creek



Patrols	28
Hours on site	68.25
# of contacts	133
Access Charges	1
Access Warnings	4
# educated	107
Other Violations	2

- Alexander Creek MVCA is one of the largest MVCAs and has a vast network of roads predominantly within the northern portion. This MVCA has the highest number of seasonal road closures. The enforcement of this MVCA is challenging due to the size and network of roads leading from Alberta to BC. Most of the non-compliance within this MVCA is due to the public entering the MVCA with vehicles and damaging property by cutting locks and chains attached to road closure gates.
- Alexander Creek MVCA receives a high number of visitors from Alberta that frequently carry out quad trips (ATV, UTV and dirt bikes) from the Atlas staging area in the Crowsnest Pass. The complaints in 2020 have decreased since the previous years. This was likely due to the Pandemic and travel restrictions.
- Access into the Alexander Creek MVCA through the BC Crowsnest Provincial Park located off of Hwy 3 near the Alberta border continues to be an issue. The issue with this access is that numerous people have been driving through the Provincial Park to the MVCA. A significant amount of time was spent in this area and along Phillips Pass by the COS. BC Parks unloaded concrete barricades in the spring of 2018, rock boulders in the spring of 2019 and more signage in 2020, but it has not stopped motorist from driving around them.

- Trail cameras have been utilized throughout the MVCA that has led to current investigations.

Recommendations:

The CO's will continue to patrol the area when it is most likely to have a high number of non-compliance. Late afternoons and weekends during favorable weather would be the most practical time to encounter motorized vehicles operating within the MVCA.

The BC/AB border Passes; Racehorse and Deadmans, are now closed year-round to motorized vehicles and will be ditched in the spring of 2021 by FLNRO. The Access Guardian will promote educational awareness for this regulation change.

The AMCEP must continue to network and provide education to the Alberta Quad Squad (Southern Alberta Rockies ATV club), Elk Valley Snowmobile/ATV Clubs, Cranbrook ATV Clubs and Teck Coal Incorporated as they own the southern portion of the MVCA as their Conservation Land. The AMCEP must continue to use surveillance equipment to provide the Access Guardian with valuable evidence used to prosecute violators.

Barnes Lake



Patrols	2
Hours on site	2.75
# of contacts	18
Access Charges	1
Access Warnings	0
# educated	6
Other Violations	0

- The Barnes Lake MVCA is located within an alpine ecosystem. A multitude of alpine species can be found within this MVCA. Lush vegetation including various wildflowers can be observed during the spring and summer months.
- The Barnes Lake MVCA is situated in a remote area and can be access by ATVs and snowmobiles. To access the MVCA riders must take a 40 minute ride departing from the Corbin Staging Area 5 Km's south on the Flathead Forest Service Road to a turn off to the north. From there riders will reach a high basin, from this point on the roads are closed to motorized use, snowmobiles are exempted. From the closure it is a 30 minute hike to Barnes Lake.
- Unfortunately, ATV's are pushing their limits into the riparian ecosystem which results in more environmental damage. To deter motorized activities the Sparwood Fish and Wildlife Club has spent a considerable amount of volunteer time to ditch out the closed road. In time these ditches wear down making it easier for motorized vehicles to access the closed area.
- The COS staff patrolled to Barnes Lake MVCA twice during the summer. A number of off-road vehicles were encountered at the lake and were issued a violation ticket. The MVCA signs were all posted and visible.

Recommendations:

A kiosk indicating the distance and time to walk into Barnes Lake could be posted at the entrance of the closed section. A Report All Poacher and Polluter (RAPP) sign would be suitable at this location as well. Although there is no cell service at this point, concerned citizens can file their reports at a later time. The FLNRO Wildlife Branch is responsible for the kiosks and signage.

The COS would like the public's assistance with reporting abuse in this MVCA, as it is a pristine mountain riparian area. Complaints forwarded to the RAPP line will aid the COS and Access Guardian with planning an enforcement strategy. Information provided by the public such as vehicle plate numbers and description of offending vehicles and operators allow the COS to pursue enforcement action. The Access Guardian will stage at the trailhead and provide information to trail users.

The main road up to Barnes MVCA was improved in the recent years due to logging which has created easier access for trucks. It is unknown if the road will be deactivated.

Chauncey Todhunter



Patrols	12
Hours on site	22.5
# of contacts	22
Access Charges	0
Access Warnings	1
# educated	7
Other Violations	0

- Chauncey Todhunter MVCA is northeast of Elkford heading towards the Fording Mine. The MVCA can easily be accessed by horseback, ATV, hiking or driving. This MVCA is the busiest during the elk and sheep hunting season. Hunters that obey the restrictions by hiking or horseback riding into the area have voiced their frustration of observing people driving by them on the closed roads. It is very important to record and report the vehicle licence plate numbers in order to allow the COS to pursue charges.
- There are no entrances from Alberta into this MVCA. It was found that most motorized traffic was from local BC residents. There were hunting camps that set up for weekly periods that were checked during the hunting season. The local Outdoor Access Guide was handed out at each camp.

Recommendations:

Numerous RAPP complaints regarding this MVCA were forwarded to the COS. All complaints forwarded to COS that included plate numbers were actioned. It would be beneficial to remind Industry workers of the MVCA boundaries and to educate workers on what information to gather for enforcement purposes.

Due to the proximity of the MVCA, the COS also conducts patrols of the Teck Coal Inc. Fording and Greenhills Mine no hunting and trespass areas. The COS will also continue to patrol the MVCA during the winter months as snowmobilers continue to abuse the MVCA.

Corbin



Patrols	25
Hours on site	46.65
# of contacts	94
Access Charges	0
Access Warnings	0
# educated	20
Other Violations	4

- Michel Creek twists along the Corbin Road which makes it convenient for the COS to check anglers while also verifying compliance within the MVCA. There are many anglers on this creek and some of them come from as far away as the USA, United Kingdom, and Europe. There is a daily quota for non-residents of BC to angle on Michel Creek. Non-residents are reminded to check the BC Fishing Synopsis before angling on our lakes and rivers to be aware of the regulations.
- Many camps set up and park along Michel Creek on the opposite side of the MVCA. The Access Guardian provided information regarding the MVCA and handed out the Outdoor Access Guide to the campers. Campers were reminded to report any motorized activities within the closure to the toll-free 24-hour RAPP line.
- The Tent Mountain Road located at the south end of the MVCA is open to motorized use and is frequently used by ORVs traveling from Alberta into BC. Motorist need to be

aware that the logging road is closed to motorized traffic and they should instead follow the cutline which is the border of the MVCA.

- Industries continue to operate within this MVCA as it is private land. Due to the high volume of industrial logging and mining traffic it has been difficult to differentiate between unpermitted and permitted vehicle use within the MVCA. Workers have permits they are required to display in the window of their vehicles. The Access Guardian provided education to a number of contractors working in the area.

Recommendations:

Recreation camps with visible ORVs near Michel Creek will continue to be checked and educated.

The public is encouraged to report violations to help the COS as there are a number of gates that are left unlocked or open (South and North Loop Road).

Logging and mine exploration have been and will continue to be active in the area and with this there will be more eyes and ears out there to witness and report violations.

East Flathead



Patrols	13
Hours on site	80
# of contacts	65
Access Charges	1
Access Warnings	0
# educated	7
Other Violations	4

- The East Flathead is one of the most remote MVCA's to patrol from Fernie. It is a recreational haven for the outdoors enthusiasts. There are three different public access points into the East Flathead MVCA; from Corbin, Morrissey and Ram/Cabin Forest Service Roads (FSR's).
- The East Flathead seems to have a steady flow of recreational users year-round and becomes busier every year. There are open roads for snowmobilers and back country skiers to utilize during the winter and during the spring, summer and fall the traffic continues for camping, fishing, hiking and hunting.
- There are several BC Forest Recreation Sites within the MVCA that are beautiful areas to camp in, but the public is reminded that they are not entitled to leave a camp set at a Forest Recreation Site for more than two weeks. Many of these sites such as Proctor Lake have been abused with litter and vandalism.
- Middle Kootenay Pass was one of the most utilized illegal entrance routes in the East Flathead from the BC/AB border. Alberta Parks has shut down the motorized activity at Castle Mountain which has helped protect the BC/AB summits vulnerable alpine terrain and big game species from disturbance/harassment. Guide Outfitters, Assistant Guides, Trappers and local members of the communities in the Elk Valley frequent this area. The COS will continue to patrol and educate throughout this enormous valley.

Recommendations:

The use of a drone could be utilized next summer during a weekend with nice weather to see if there is any non-compliance.

A yearly focused project in the summer and/or fall in the East Flathead MVCA will continue to be conducted by the East Kootenay COS.

Galton Range



Patrols	12
Hours on site	41.25
# of contacts	106
Access Charges	0
Access Warnings	3
# educated	19
Other Violations	11

- November is the busiest month for hunters in the Galton Range MVCA which borders Hwy 93 on the East side of the highway and South of the Elk River. This MVCA includes twelve mountain drainages with access into six of them. The archery season ends in December and it is also a popular area for hunters as it is a migration route for deer. Mule deer (4pt) goes until November 10th and then an LEH sheep hunt is open until November 20th and the season for whitetail deer (bucks) continues till the end of November.

Recommendations:

The broken gate to Rabbit Lake/Upper Wigwam MVCA in Phillips Pass still needs to be fixed. Locks are continuously being cut in the southern Galton Range.

Summer traffic continues to drive up Red Canyon FSR that is closed from June 15-August 31. COS will be patrolling the Kooconusa area in the summer for the Forest Range and Practices Act (FRPA) motorized closures, so they will patrol and respond to complaints in Grasmere as well.

Grave Prairie



Patrols	35
Hours on site	56
# of contacts	121
Access Charges	0
Access Warnings	0
# educated	42
Other Violations	3

- Grave Prairie was patrolled numerous times every month throughout the year by the COS as it is a critical and extremely valuable winter range for wildlife. It continues to be the busiest MVCA for recreationists year-round (especially during the bow elk and deer seasons).
- The Elk River was also checked for anglers during the Grave Prairie patrols. During those check's violation tickets were written for people fishing without a licence and fishing with prohibited gear.
- The Sparwood Fish and Wildlife Association continues to manage the Grave Lake Campground. This campground is family oriented and has been cleaned up over the years. This MVCA has improved with compliance as the camping is more appealing and MVCA enforcement has been strong in the last 9 years.

Recommendations:

The Access Guardian will conduct patrols and monitor the campers and motorized activity during the long Weekends. The Access Guardian and Teck Coal Inc. will continue to improve

the MVCA’s compliance. Teck Coal Inc has done an excellent job by locking gates, ditching roads and posting signage in this area. Teck Coal Inc and Nature Trust are the landowners for Grave Prairie MVCA.

Sheep Mountain



Patrols	38
Hours on site	53
# of contacts	54
Access Charges	0
Access Warnings	2
# educated	3
Other Violations	1

- The Sheep Mountain MVCA does not fall within Electoral Area “A”, but was approved to be patrolled as part of the AMCEP.
- Sheep Mountain is primarily patrolled during late October and November for deer hunting season.
- Sheep Mountain has a large area of sensitive grasslands that elk and deer rely on for year-round feed. These grasslands do not recover as easily as other rugged habitats. Motorized vehicle tracks are seen driving off the main open roads and onto the grasslands. There are signs posted on the closed roads which have not been damaged.
- There is a dirt bike park on the Northeast corner of the MVCA that still needs to be monitored. Most roads around this area have been deactivated.

Recommendations:

Due to noncompliance, CO’s should focus on the South end of Sheep Mountain.

Patrols will continue to be conducted in the winter months as snow bikes are becoming a bigger concern in this MVCA.

Upper Elk Valley-Ford



Patrols	8
Hours on site	22.75
# of contacts	89
Access Charges	0
Access Warnings	0
# educated	23
Other Violations	2

- The Upper Elk Valley-Fording MVCA is a heavily used road closure throughout the summer and early fall months. It receives motorized traffic from the local communities and people from throughout Canada and the United States.
- The Elk River FSR starts in Elkford ending at the Elk Lakes Provincial Park. Height of the Rockies Provincial Park also borders the AMA to the West. Hikers, campers, bikers, anglers, hunter and ATV's all thrive to enjoy the beautiful views of the Upper Elk Valley.
- The Big Weary Ridge Trail is open on the East side from July 1-Aug 31. The Elkford ATV Club has been maintaining the trail and removing garbage. The Elkford ATV club members are knowledgeable of the MVCA's within the Elk Valley. The Elkford ATV club has volunteered to provide MVCA awareness to other ATV users using the online BC/ATV website.
- The Weary Creek Provincial Recreation Site/Trail and the Aldridge Creek Provincial Recreation Trail are both closed to motorized traffic and are maintained by the

Hornaday Wilderness Society. The Hornaday Wilderness Society will continue to maintain the trails for horseback, biking and hiking use.

Recommendations:

This MVCA does not receive a high volume of complaints via the RAPP line. Although complaints are low, patrols should focus on the late summer and fall season for anglers and hunters.

It has been reported that younger ORV operators from Elkford have been riding portions of the Elk River FSR. In order to lawfully use an ORV on a FSR operators must be 16 years and older, wear an approved helmet, have registration, purchase \$200,000 third party liability insurance and possess a valid driver's licence.

CO's also enforces the BC Recreation Sites and Trails regulation which means they will be enforcing any non-compliance within the Recreation Campgrounds (camper overstaying their 14 day visit to the recreation campground).

Upper Flathead



Patrols	6
Hours on site	30
# of contacts	27
Access Charges	0
Access Warnings	0
# educated	17
Other Violations	1

- This MVCA is remote and takes a full day to gain access by vehicle.

- This MVCA is open for snowmobiling in the winter.
- New gates were built after the 2017 fires have helped restrict access on the closed roads. Unfortunately, the locks continue to be cut on these gates.

Recommendations:

Conducting patrols during the hunting season would allow officers to educate hunters regarding the Upper Flathead MVCA. ATV patrols conducted from the North of the MVCA would allow for easier access to the Shoefly Road.

Upper Wigwam



Patrols	7
Hours on site	8.75
# of contacts	12
Access Charges	0
Access Warnings	0
# educated	0
Other Violations	0

- Anglers from around the world enjoy fishing the Wigwam River. It provides world class bull trout angling. Currently the Wigwam River has no bull trout retention and is a

classified river (required licence to fish it). It has been reported to the COS that some anglers are retaining bull trout and using prohibited methods to catch fish.

- The Ram Creek FSR is open to motorized vehicles but allows access to many closed roads and trails. This MVCA has very steep terrain leading to the Wigwam River. To access the river most anglers hike the steep terrain. In some cases, anglers that are not willing to hike will drive around gates to access the Wigwam River.
- The locked gate over the Wigwam River, near the mouth of Ram Creek and the gate on the East Side show signs of vehicles driving around and into the closure.
- The lock on the gate situated at the Rabbit Creek road has been purposely broken multiple times allowing access into the closure. The locks frequently are vandalized during the hunting season. Vehicles are accessing the Rabbit Creek gate through Phillips Pass from the Galton MVCA.

Recommendations:

More focus on educating anglers regarding the MVCA boundaries should be continued.

All gates with locks within this MVCA must be inspected regularly.

Patrols within this MVCA should be completed during peak angling periods. Anglers tend to favor this area during the hotter periods of the year in late August.

Two Forest Recreation Site are located adjacent to the Wigwam River and is a suitable location to educate the public.

Weigert Creek



Patrols	2
Hours on site	3
# of contacts	0
Access Charges	0
Access Warnings	0
# educated	0
Other Violations	0

- Weigert Creek MVCA is utilized by horseback riders, hikers, hunters and 4X4 recreationists.
- Only the lower half of the MVCA can be accessed by truck, the other two trails are accessed by ORV or small trackers/jeeps. Travel to this MVCA can also be accessed from Elkford. It is hard to ascertain if motorists are illegally in the MVCA without patrolling to the southwest portion of the MVCA.
- There are dedicated members of the public that frequently use this MVCA and will report any violations they see occurring to the COS or the RAPP line.
- Snowmobiles are exempt in the MVCA during the winter.

Recommendations:

Use of trail camera's will be considered in the future to ascertain how many ORV's are traveling through the MVCA on the "look-out trail", primarily during hunting season. This will assist Officers in future patrol/enforcement measures.

Wigwam Flats



Patrols	25
Hours on site	75.2
# of contacts	105
Access Charges	3
Access Warnings	5
# educated	16
Other Violations	5

- Wigwam Flats has breathtaking views of the China Wall on the South end of the MVCA. Mount Broadwood on the North end is a caver's paradise. Wigwam Flats is probably one of BC's most valuable winter ranges and has almost every species of wildlife that you can view in one given area. The Wigwam River offers amazing fishing opportunities to the fly fisherman. Silver Springs are three turquoise lakes that connect to one another which offer a beautiful 15-30-minute hike. Unfortunately, Silver Springs has turned into a party site for people who like to leave their garbage behind for animals and other people to pick up.
- Wigwam Flats is a sensitive area for wildlife and its habitat. Invasive plants have taken over in some of the areas and are hard to control. Invasive Plant specialists have advised that motor vehicles have spread the invasive plants to other parts of this MVCA.
- This area has also become more popular for the mountain bike community. Although mountain bikers are allowed in this area when motor vehicles are not; it is recommended that they stay on the main trails as mountain bike tires too can spread invasive plants. It is illegal to harass wildlife with a motor vehicle and for dogs to chase wildlife. It is recommended for dogs to be on leash in this area.

- The Fernie Rod and Gun Club have spent many volunteer hours controlling invasive species within this MVCA in the past by hand picking the invasive plants.
- The Wildlife Branch had the area sprayed for invasive plant species (Hawk weed, St. Johns Wart).
- Motorists are using the pipeline to illegally gain access to the MVCA.
- When the gates are closed, hunters and anglers use alternative methods such as mountain bikes to access roads beyond the gates.
- E-bikes are being utilized in this area and will be charged under the WLA if they are operating on a non-motorized road. They are classified as a motor vehicle under the WLA.

Recommendations:

The COS will continue to conduct day patrols during any time of the week in 2021. It would be best to do most ATV patrols during the seasonal road openings through June 15-July15 where people go off the main open roads, these typically involve; users such as ORV's, kayakers, anglers, campers etc.

The maps at the entrances of the seasonal open roads eventually need to be updated. They are fading and peeling off.

A group of 2 dirt bikers and 1 ATV were caught fleeing CO's in early September as they were driving through the closed portions of the MVCA. They were eventually tracked down and caught. They did not have any registration on their ORV's, failed to stop for CO's and were operating in a MVCA non motorized area. The group was charged approximately \$2500 in tickets, none of which have been paid which makes them suspended from hunting and fishing in AB and BC.

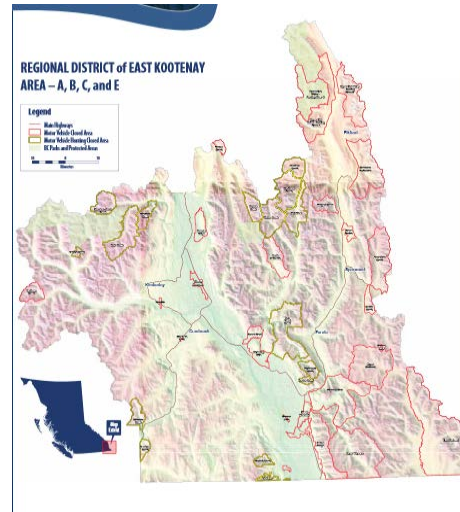
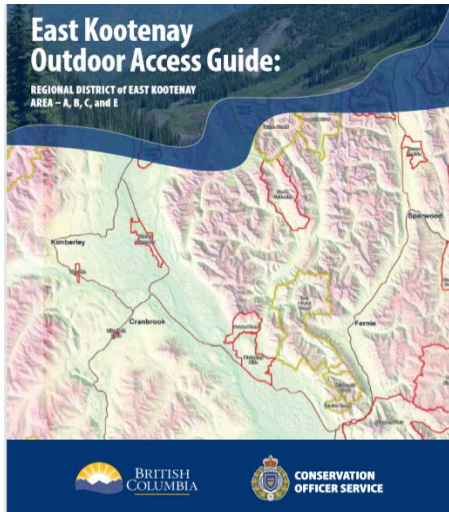
Education/Outreach

There are plans for a new Outdoor Access Guide for 2021 which is mentioned below. Since it was created in 2013 the Outdoor Access Guide has been very useful for hunters and other recreational users.

- The Access Guardian continued communication with the Ecosystem Biologist throughout the year. The COS and local recreation club members will help post MVCA signage.
- With most individuals using or having access to smart phones, MVCA maps can be obtained at <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/kootenay/eco/access.htm>. There are a variety of Apps that can be utilized to run these maps while in the MVCA. Some of these Apps are free and others are based on a subscription service. The Access Guardian uses an App called Avenza, which is GPS capable and does not require a cellular signal. It is recommended that users download these maps as it will assist in proper route finding and will avoid costly and potentially environmentally damaging mistakes. The public can contact the Access Guardian if they are having trouble downloading the maps.
- A legislative change has occurred under the Wildlife Act that deals with the use of pedal assisted mountain bikes (E-Bike) within non-motorized areas. It is now illegal to use a pedal assisted bike within a closed non-motorized area. An E-Bike is now defined under the Wildlife Act as:
 - **"electric bicycle"** means a wheeled device
 - (a) on which a person may ride,
 - (b) with pedals or hand cranks that allow it to be propelled by human power, and
 - (c) with an electric motor;

If the bike has a motor attached to it whether or not it is in use, it is not permitted within MVCA. With E-bikes growing in popularity the public is encouraged to contact the RAPP line if E-bikes are encountered within any MVCA.

- The Access Guardian worked with the BC Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers Club based out of the East Kootenay's regarding fundraising efforts towards the 2019 issue of the OAG. The club presented to the RDEK electoral areas and the Municipalities of Fernie, Sparwood, Elkford and Cranbrook asking for funding towards the new OAG magazine in 2019. The club and FLNRO's Habitat Biologist have spent countless hours working on this project and it is appreciated that they are taking the leadership on developing the new OAG edition. They want to add the Cranbrook area MVCA's (the trench) into the magazine and update the maps for better clarity. The presentations were well received and the funding goal of \$10,000 was met. It is anticipated that the new magazine will be ready for the spring of 2021 once the new maps are updated.



- The Access Guardian has not participated in Municipal talks in the Elk Valley (Ferne, Sparwood and Elkford), schools or attend community meetings this year due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Education was provided by email and by phone. Compliance and Enforcement checks were still completed in the field by foot, ATV, UTV and pickup trucks. A presentation was provided to the RDEK, Elkford and Sparwood council members in Fernie at Lizard Creek Lodge on September 10th. Alberta municipal representatives were present that could learn from the AMCEP’s success.
- There is a transition from calling the non motorized road closures from Access Management Areas (AMA’s) to Motor Vehicle Closed Areas (MVCA’s) for consistency and clarity throughout the Province.
- The Columbia Basin Trust donated \$1370 towards new MVCA signs for Electoral Area A. The Elk Valley MVCA’s needed new signs, so this was great timing. The yellow signs have been upgraded with new symbols thanks to the local Elk Valley business Kootenay Signs in Fernie by Loretta Johnson.



Other Work Projects

In addition to the Access Guardian's regular duties and responsibilities, there are several focused enforcement projects that the COS organize and conduct every year. The following is a breakdown of the different work projects that the Access Guardian took part in 2020.

- Since 2015 the Conservation Officer Service has been mandated with enforcing the Off-Road Vehicle Act (ORVA). During the winter of 2020 the East Kootenay COS patrolled crown land, Forest Service Roads and snowmobile staging areas to conduct compliance checks. There continues to be a high non-compliance rate with snowmobilers for not having their snow machines registered and not having a plate displayed (\$173-\$230). Corbin, Wigwam Flats, East Flathead and Galton MVCA's are the most utilized MVCA's for illegal snowmobile use. Other MVCA's have exemptions for snowmobile use.
- The Fernie COS met with the Fernie Snowmobile Associations (FSA) in November via zoom and has provided MVCA information to the club. They will continue the communication on what the requirements are while snowmobiling in an MVCA and what they need for the ORVA and regulations.
- Currently BC's waters are free of aquatic invasive species and we want to keep it that way. Inspection stations across BC have been strategically placed to stop motorist with vessels to inspect, decontaminate and educate under the Wildlife Act and Controlled Alien Species Regulation 94/2009. The inspection stations are open from April-November. COS responded to calls of motorist who failed to stop for the inspection stations. Motto; "Clean, Drain and Dry".

2021 Recommendations

- MVCA outreach and education will be ongoing throughout 2021 however, many presentations will be on hold until the pandemic improves.
- Trail cameras and drones have proven to be useful tools to address non-compliance within the MVCAs. The program has a total of 8 trail cameras that the Access Guardian utilizes every year. The Drone has been used in several of the East Kootenay MVCAs. It allows Officers to have an aerial view to determine non-compliance, areas of concern or an offence in progress. Prior to having access to the Drone, the only way to achieve this was through the use of helicopters which are costly. One of the five Provincial CO Drone Operators are in Fernie; CO Gordon.

Summary

The Access Management Compliance and Enforcement Program (AMCEP) is the only program of its kind in all of British Columbia. It is a successful example of what the COS in partnership with Regional Districts and community members can do to ensure British Columbia's resources are kept sustainable for future generations. The AMCEP achieved over 800 hours of committed MVCA patrols, compliance and enforcement checks, investigations and education/outreach in 2020 despite an increase in COS core mandate related work and a worldwide pandemic. The general public has well received the AMCEP and expressed positive feedback. The East Kootenay region offers its inhabitants and visitors a vast opportunity of recreational experiences while submerged in the beauty of the Canadian Rockies. The Access Guardian will continue to work with the public and user groups to ensure that these cherished opportunities are available for future users.