

B.9.8 Access

Access is one of the most influential factors affecting wildlife and wildlife habitat stewardship. In the East Kootenay, access planning initiatives designed to husband and sustain habitat and wildlife habitat, species and populations have a long history (Appendix 24.4).

The implementation and enforcement of appropriate access management is essential to achieve wildlife management objectives.

Issues:

- Issues of concern related to access and road development and use are habitat alteration, fragmentation and loss, wildlife mortality, harassment and displacement, dispersal barriers and pollution.
- Section B.7.1: Recreation Access and Development needs to be implemented
- Environmental and social carrying capacity, environmental sensitivity and compatibility analysis, and cumulative impact assessments within the plan area are needed
- Unregulated, repetitive or cumulative access-related disturbances result in:
 - adverse impacts on sensitive wildlife and wildlife habitats
 - reduced vigour, reproduction capability and ultimately reduced wildlife populations (Appendix 24.4)
 - alterations of normal behavioral functions resulting in abandonment of quality habitat
 - interruption of foraging and breeding activities and intrusion on seasonal and daily movement opportunities
- There are potential impacts resulting from international and interprovincial motorized access

Intent:

- Manage recreation access and development (see Section B.7.1) in order to reduce impacts on wide-ranging carnivores
- Industrial access development and use will give consideration to ensuring habitat effectiveness
- Access management will recognize the value of retaining ecological integrity, environmental stewardship principles, and conservation goals (Appendix 24.4) to reduce the risk of:
 - habitat loss, fragmentation, damage or alienation
 - sedimentation and erosion
 - wildlife harassment and displacement and the subsequent potential for decreased habitat effectiveness
 - increased pressure on fish and wildlife resources and associated loss of populations and recruitment potential
 - noxious weed dispersal
 - exacerbating the loss of wild-land or remote habitat environments

- increased vulnerability (from a hunting perspective there is a direct correlation between harvesting success and uncontrolled road uses and road density)
- reducing the natural distribution, movement, foraging and reproduction opportunities of wildlife species and populations
- unnatural behavioural response to threats
- Reclamation of roads and trails, when no longer needed, will focus on re-establishment of native species and returning the landscape to as natural a condition as possible

Economic benefits and opportunities:

- Maintains the integrity of the environmental resource base
- Enhances public recreation, wildlife-based industries and commercial recreation operations
- Reduced costs in weed control
- On reclaimed roads, increased forage and forest regrowth and reduced road maintenance costs

Measures of success:

- Successful management of access that supports conservation values
 - Maintenance of effective wildlife habitats
 - Maintenance of functional and diversified wildlife species and populations
 - Decrease in the spread of noxious weeds
- Retention of remote wild-land characteristics