

## Public Hearing Report – Bylaw Nos. 3270 & 3271 Toby Benches / Statham-Widmer

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This report is submitted to the Board of Directors of the Regional District of East Kootenay pursuant to Section 464 of the *Local Government Act*.

The public hearing for Bylaw No. 3270 cited as “Regional District of East Kootenay – Lake Windermere Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 2929, 2019 – Amendment Bylaw No. 11, 2023 (Toby Benches / Statham-Widmer)” and Bylaw No. 3271 cited as “Regional District of East Kootenay – Columbia Valley Zoning Bylaw No. 3255, 2023 – Amendment Bylaw No. 3, 2023 (Toby Benches / Statham-Widmer)” was held on April 30, 2025 at 6:00 pm at the Columbia Valley Chamber of Commerce.

The following Regional District representatives attended the public hearing:

Director Susan Clovechok, Electoral Area F  
Director Roberta Schnider, Electoral Area G  
Director Allen Miller, District of Invermere  
Krista Gilbert, Planning Technician  
Krista Konchak, Administrative Assistant

The notice for the hearing was published in the April 24, 2025, issue of the Columbia Valley Pioneer. Notices were sent to fourteen (14) adjacent property owners on April 15, 2025 by regular mail with no notices returned as undeliverable.

Staff read bylaw introduction notes before the hearing and there was a questions and answers period before the hearing. Chair Clovechok convened the hearing at 7:26 pm and Regional District representatives were introduced.

Chair Clovechok advised those in attendance:

- to identify themselves and the property they own that may be affected by the Bylaws;
- that only those written and/or verbal presentations made at the hearing will be considered as part of the hearing report;
- that no written or verbal submissions will be allowed subsequent to the close of this hearing.

**Bylaw No. 3270** provides for:

1. This Bylaw may be cited as “Regional District of East Kootenay – Lake Windermere Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 2929, 2019 – Amendment Bylaw No. 11, 2023 (Toby Benches / Statham-Widmer)”.
2. The designations for those parts of Lot 1, District Lot 375, Kootenay District, Plan 4119 outlined on the attached Schedule A, which is incorporated in and form part of the Bylaw, is amended from RR, Rural Residential to SH, Small Holdings and CR, Commercial Recreation.

**Bylaw No. 3271** provides for:

1. This Bylaw may be cited as “Regional District of East Kootenay – Columbia Valley Zoning Bylaw No. 3255, 2023 – Amendment Bylaw No. 3, 2023 (Toby Benches / Statham-Widmer).”

2. Section 3.3 is amended by adding the following:

**Campground** means an area of *land* designated and intended for the placement of tents, *recreational vehicles*, *park model trailers*, or *cottages*. A *campground* includes any parcel of *land* with any combination of 3 or more tents, *recreational vehicles*, *park model trailers* or *cottages* placed on it, occupied seasonally, not including *glamping cottages*, *glamping structures*, *prospector tents* or *stationary recreational vehicles*. A *campground* does not include a *manufactured home park*, a *motel*, a *nature resort* or a *hotel*.

**Glamping cottage** means a *building* that includes sleeping facilities and may include cooking and sanitary facilities. A *glamping cottage* may not have a *gross floor area* exceeding 53.5 m<sup>2</sup> including additions such as covered patios and covered or uncovered platforms, or sundecks at grade. A *glamping cottage* must not contain a basement. The maximum height of a crawl space below the first *storey* of a *glamping cottage* is 1.2 m. A *glamping cottage* is not a *dwelling unit*.

**Glamping site** means an area used or intended to be used, leased or rented for transient paying guests or employee accommodation within a *nature resort* only, containing one of the following units: *glamping cottages*, *glamping structures*, *prospector tents* or *stationary recreational vehicles*, within a *nature resort* only.

**Glamping structure** means a one-*storey structure* which is situated on an elevated platform and which is constructed of stick framing or other building materials and may include a canvas or other similar material roof and which is capable of providing overnight accommodation. A *glamping structure* includes sleeping facilities and may include cooking and sanitary facilities for the occupants of the *glamping structure*. A *glamping structure* may not have a *gross floor area* exceeding 70 m<sup>2</sup> including additions such as covered patios and covered or uncovered platforms and at grade sundecks. *Glamping structures* are designed and constructed to provide 3-season accommodation.

**Nature resort** means a group of self-contained units, limited to *glamping structures*, *prospector tents*, *glamping cottages* and *stationary recreational vehicles*, that are designed in a way that fits into the surrounding landscape and are intended to provide temporary accommodation to transient paying guests. *Nature resorts* have a central parking area so as individual vehicles cannot drive directly to accommodation to restrict impacts to the property, provide communal gathering areas for guests, and may provide food service to guests. *Nature resorts* provide four-season accommodation opportunities.

**Prospector tent** means a wall tent or canvas tent that has four straight vertical (or near vertical) walls made of heavy canvas or similar materials and which may or may not be situated on an elevated platform. A *prospector tent* includes sleeping facilities and may include cooking and sanitary facilities for the occupants of the *prospector tent*. A *prospector tent* may not have a *gross floor area* exceeding 53.5 m<sup>2</sup> including additions such as covered patios and covered or uncovered platforms or at grade sundecks. *Prospector tents* are designed and constructed to provide 3-season accommodation.

**Stationary recreational vehicle** means a *recreational vehicle* situated on a *glamping site* to provide sleeping facilities and may include cooking and sanitary facilities. A *stationary recreational vehicle* provides year-round nightly rental by the transient paying guest or employee accommodation. A *stationary recreational vehicle* may not be licensed for travel on a public road.

3. Schedule A Section 3.2 (6) (d) is amended by adding the following:

(vi) *Nature resort* - 1 per *glamping site*

4. Part 4 of Schedule A is hereby amended by adding a new zone within the category of Resort Zone as follows:

Nature Resort Zone NR-1

5. Part 4 of Schedule A is hereby amended by adding a new zone:

**4.50 Nature Resort Zone: NR-1**

(1) Principal Uses

(a) *Nature resort*

(2) Accessory Uses

(a) Food service

(b) *Concession stand*

(c) Gift shop, novelty, souvenir shop

(d) *Employee accommodation*

(e) Uses, *buildings*, and *structures accessory* to a permitted use

(3) Parcel Area

Subject to section 2 of Schedule A to this Bylaw, no *parcel* shall be created in the NR-1 zone which is less than 8.0 ha in area.

(4) Regulations

In the NR-1 zone, no *building* or *structure* may be constructed or placed which contravenes the regulation contained in the table below. Column 1 identifies the matter to be regulated. Column 2 establishes the regulations.

COLUMN 1	COLUMN 2
(a) Maximum density:	
▪ <i>Glamping sites per parcel</i>	90
(b) Maximum percentage of total permitted <i>glamping sites</i> permitted to be:	
▪ <i>Cottages</i>	40%
▪ <i>Glamping structures</i>	70%

COLUMN 1	COLUMN 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Prospector tents</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Stationary recreational vehicles</i></li> </ul>	<p>50%</p> <p>20%</p>
(c) Minimum setbacks:	
Buildings or structures from:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>front parcel line</i></li> <li>▪ <i>rear parcel line</i></li> <li>▪ <i>side parcel line</i></li> <li>▪ <i>side parcel line adjacent to a highway other than a lane</i></li> </ul>	<p>10.0 m</p> <p>20.0 m</p> <p>10.0 m</p> <p>10.0 m</p>
(d) Maximum height:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Cottage</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Glamping structure</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Prospector tent</i></li> </ul>	<p>6.0 m</p> <p>5.0 m</p> <p>5.0 m</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Other buildings or structures</i></li> </ul>	9.0 m
(v) Maximum parcel coverage	10%

(5) Other Regulations

- (a) All persons carrying out a use permitted in the NR-1 zone shall comply with the relevant provisions of Parts 1, 2 and 3 of Schedule A to this Bylaw.
- (b) The placement or parking of *recreational vehicles* is not permitted within the NR-1 zone, except as *Stationary Recreational Vehicles*.
- (c) The placement of *park model trailers* is not permitted in the NR-1 zone.
- (d) Each *glamping site* shall not be less than 140 m<sup>2</sup> in area and accessible from the internal pathway system of the *nature resort*. *Glamping sites* shall not be directly accessible from a *highway*.
- (e) The maximum number of *cottages*, *glamping structures*, *prospector tents* or *stationary recreational vehicles* permitted within a *glamping site* shall be either one (1) *cottage*, one (1) *glamping structure*, one (1) *prospector tent* or one (1) *stationary recreational vehicle*.
- (f) A food service as an accessory use shall not exceed 200 m<sup>2</sup>.
- (g) A *concession stand* as an accessory use shall not exceed 50 m<sup>2</sup>.
- (h) A gift shop, novelty, souvenir shop as an accessory use shall not exceed 50 m<sup>2</sup>.
- (i) *Employee accommodation* shall be provided in *glamping cottages*, *glamping structures*, *prospector tents* or *stationary recreational vehicles* as permitted in this zone.



- (j) Storage sheds shall not be located within a *glamping site*.
  - (k) A buffer shall be provided around the periphery of the NR-1 zone not less than 10.0 m wide adjacent to the *front* and *side parcel lines* and not less than 20.0 m wide adjacent to the *rear parcel line* within which no *glamping site*, parking, garbage disposal areas, privies, or recreational areas shall be permitted. The only roadways permitted in the buffer area are those which cross the *front parcel line* buffer at as close to right angles as practical and connect directly with the internal roadway system.
  - (l) No person shall use or permit the use of any portion of a *parcel* in the NR-1 zone for:
    - i. The *wrecking and repair of vehicles*; or
    - ii. The storage of *derelict vehicles*.
  - (m) All persons carrying out a use permitted in the NR-1 zone shall comply with the relevant provisions of section 1.14 of Schedule A to this Bylaw with respect to screening of outdoor storage.
  - (n) The owner of the *nature resort* shall provide a potable water system in compliance with the *Drinking Water Protection Act*.
  - (o) The owner of the *nature resort* shall provide for the disposal of all wastewater to be discharged into a community sewer system or into a private sewerage system in compliance with the Sewerage System Regulation (*Public Health Act*) or Municipal Wastewater Regulation (*Environmental Management Act*).
  - (p) All *glamping cottages, glamping structures, prospector tents and stationary recreational vehicles* that contain a bathroom must be connected to a wastewater system for the disposal of sewage.
  - (q) Holdings tanks are not a permitted form of liquid waste disposal.
6. The designations for those parts of Lot 1, District Lot 375, Kootenay District, Plan 4119 outlined on the attached Schedule A, which is incorporated in and forms part of the Bylaw, is amended from A-2, Rural Residential (Country) Zone to SH-1, Small Holdings Residential Zone and NR-1, Nature Resort Zone.

Staff read the legal proceedings for the public hearing as set out by the *Local Government Act* and noted that a report of the hearing would be submitted to the Board at its May 9, 2025 meeting.

Staff advised that sixty (60) written submissions have been received prior to the public hearing. One additional written submission was received before the close of the public hearing. Nineteen (19) express support or conditional support. Reasons for support include economic benefits, increasing tourism, educating visitors, will keep the property maintained and reduce risk of wildfire, the need for more tourism accommodation in the Columbia Valley, noting a desire for this type of unique, nature-based experience, will cultivate environmental stewardship, and the proposed residential lots will answer a need for more housing in the area. Conditional support is given if the number of sites proposed is scaled back.

Forty-one (41) written submissions express opposition or concern for the application. Concerns include traffic and road safety, and access to and from the property, negative impacts on wildlife and their movement, connectivity and habitat, particularly threatened or endangered species, the need to protect the wetlands and ensuring people don't go down to them, not fitting the character of the neighbourhood, water quantity concerns, that the land was bought with the intention of developing it, zoning changes should be proactive not reactive, concerns about overtourism, the precedent this would set, increased risk of fires and fire protection concerns with proximity to nearest fire hydrant, firetruck access, and one egress road from Wilmer, concerns about the additional residential lots, impact on property value, the large scope/intensity of the proposal, concerns that no socio-economic assessment was completed, sewer concerns and its impact to the adjacent wetlands, no consideration for the cumulative environmental effects of the proposal, concerns about adequacy of the proposed covenant, concerns about garbage management and attracting wildlife, the spread of invasive species, the cultural impact on local indigenous communities, the increased strain on the local healthcare system, trespassing on neighbouring properties, impact on views, the need for a more thorough environmental study to be done, and concerns about the process and limited timeframe to provide comments.

Several members of the public and the proponent attended the hearing and the following people spoke:

Glenn Flynn, 4483 Pine Bay: He stated that this project will have a negative impact on the Columbia Wetlands and is concerned about the lack of environmental assessment. Two days is not enough and there needs to be a thorough review spanning multiple seasons. He stated that the wildlife corridor through this property is essential to wildlife wellbeing.

Megan Anderson, 470 Pine Avenue: On behalf of the Shuswap Band she stated that the elk migration is of utmost importance and questions the accuracy of the environmental report submitted regarding badger impacts as this property provides critical habitat. There needs to be a cumulative impact assessment for the property and she also notes concern for impacts on waterfowl. As a resident she is concerned about traffic implications, states there needs to be more consideration for fighting fires, this is a safety issue for all Wilmer residents.

Louise Helmer, 1111 1<sup>st</sup> Street: In support, noting that we can't be selfish with the use of land that we are lucky to be able to enjoy. She states that wildfire hazard is a valid concern, but it is also a concern at other heavily used recreational areas, including Lake Enid, and indicates that those places are more of a wildfire hazard. She indicates that this project seems to be carefully considered and designed and is a better use of land than other alternatives.

Koral Wysocki, 1402 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue: Opposed as proposed. If done correctly it could be good but as proposed it doesn't seem respectful, further evaluations should be completed at this stage instead of at the subdivision stage, as rezoning is a critical moment.

Pam Meuneir, 9130 Elmer Avenue: As the co-chair of the Wilmer FireSmart program she has concerns about the one access road to Wilmer and this proposal being on that access route. She is concerned this proposal would double the population of Wilmer and stated that conversations with the Invermere fire department resulted in them saying they didn't have the capacity to save houses in Wilmer. There needs to be closer attention to fire. She also noted that the interconnectedness of amenities should be considered, guests will be making trips into Invermere, walking, biking and driving on the access road, adding significant trips to the already dangerous road. She stated that she wants to see good development and residents should have a voice now and later into the process.

Stacy Eadon, 9290 Westside Road: She stated that she is two doors down from the proposal. She has concerns about fire safety and road infrastructure. She stated that this will affect all Wilmer residents and these concerns need to be addressed before guests start arriving on site.

Marj Widmer (proponent), Westside Road: Safety is their number one concern when developing the property. She stated they will be starting small with one or two units per year until more established. Ninety (90) is the maximum number permitted. She stated that they will be using the least invasive type of structure, does not want to harm the land and will develop the property respectfully. They want to share the beauty and wildlife experience with guests and they would be living adjacent to the development to monitor activity.

Karen Barkley, 9150 Moffat Avenue: Putting a climate change hat on, the Wetlands are drying out. Water is a big concern and there needs to be a hydrological assessment completed for the project. She stated that the Wetlands need to be protected and she has concerns about the sewage disposal impacting the Wetlands. She stated that she understands this is addressed at a later stage, but it should come first.

Hermann Mauthner, 4385 Bullin Street: He noted that he sent a letter and is strongly opposed. He stated that this has already been rejected and the APC did not support this proposal. This land is important for the health of wildlife, it provides winter range, is a major connectivity corridor, and provides badger habitat. He is concerned that the environmental report is incomplete. He is concerned that the peaceful life of Wilmer will be negatively impacted. He stated the land should have a government directed study completed, a study completed over one summer is not sufficient.

Gigi Statham, 9441 Westside Road: She is neither for or against the application, but does want to state that there are water concerns. If done properly the development could mitigate fire risk. She states that the rezoning shouldn't go through before a traffic study is completed. She notes that the property is a major wildlife corridor and is a very special property. She strongly urges consideration be given to the precedent this would set. She notes that she doesn't want Wilmer to be overrun with tourists but something needs to be done on the property, it is not farmable.

Tracy Flynn, 4483 Pine Bay: Opposed. She identified her connection to Wildsight and stated that humans can't exist without intact ecosystems. She wants to evaluate projects fairly, not just say no to all development, but has concerns with the process and there not being enough time to review all the associated documents and this was a very stressful process that does not feel fair. She suggests that local experts should be used more for these types of projects and notes the process should be revised.

Terry Widmer (proponent), 9369 Westside Road: He notes that the property is currently a fire hazard and through development of the property it will be cleaned up and fire suppression action will be taken to reduce the risk. He notes that there is more traffic in other locations that have more impact than this development will have. He notes that the property will be developed slowly over time and respectfully. He wants the development to be kept simple and low key, with minimal traffic impacts. He states that the road is already bad.

Ashley Smith, 4398 Smith Street: Opposed. She has concerns about the migrating elk, traffic, particularly with no shoulder on the road, the lack of fire information, sewer and garbage concerns. She states that the property should remain zoned residential and be reserved for wildlife.

Emily Dewey, 4300 Wells Street: Opposed. This approval would be a slippery slope. She wants the Wetlands to be cared for. She understands change must happen but the environment should come first.

Baiba Morrow, 9154 Fairview Avenue: She notes that she is an eighteen year resident and all concerns already stated are valid. She is reminded of Jumbo and encourages community engagement. She is opposed and stresses the need to listen to each other.

Sarah Locke, 1575 Windermere Loop Road: She is opposed to the density, there should be fewer units. She states that Wilmer and the Wetlands are unique and should not be threatened.

Gerry Wilkie, 4801 Riverview Drive: He commends the public hearing process and it looks like a very solid development on paper. However, he is concerned about the future development of the Columbia Valley. He is concerned about preserving the Wetlands. He notes that the comments summarized at the beginning of the hearing provides a solid base of cumulative impacts and that list should be looked at carefully. He is opposed and urges that the decision be weighed carefully.

Colleen Booth, 1217 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue: In support. She initially had questions but the applicant explained they would be developing two units this year. Ninety (90) is the total permitted not what will be developed at this time. She states that Lake Enid use is scary and the development seems to want to preserve the area. She states that this will take away from irresponsible camping already happening in the area. She notes the need for tourism accommodation and this seems to be a perfect solution. She states that studies have been done, the applicants want to do it well and that the development can coexist with wildlife.

Karen Reisle, 9159 Wallis Avenue: She states that she is not against camping but has concerns about the traffic and scope of the development. She states that once the door is opened it cannot be closed.

Marj Widmer (2<sup>nd</sup> time speaking) (proponent), Westside Road: She notes that 90 is the maximum, this year will maybe do two. She states the development will be done respectfully to the animals and wetlands. She notes that right now it is a fire hazard and they will work hard to FireSmart the property. Their number one concern is safety and animals. She notes that you can't walk down to the wetlands from the property, they will monitor for encroachment, it is very secluded down there, they want people to experience the wildlife and no pets will be allowed to chase wildlife.

Bryon Benn, 4926 Timber Ridge: He is opposed to a project of this scale. He is concerned about nesting waterfowl and agrees with all that has been said about wildlife land use. He hopes more studies will be completed and wants to see a cumulative impact study.

Louise Helmer (2<sup>nd</sup> time speaking), 1111 1<sup>st</sup> Street: She notes that there is lots of concern about the Wetlands but states that people aren't going to climb down there, they will find another access, not just from the property. She mentioned a decision allowing motorboats up the Wetlands and that existing homes all along Westside Road could contaminate the wetlands. She notes that the proposal is not invasive to the Wetlands and encourage people to view the property.

Stan Wieler, 9367 Westside Road: He states that his biggest concern is how the property is now, it is a big fire hazard. Any development on the property will be a big improvement. He states that he knows the property well and elk do migrate through the property, but any improvements are good.

Tracy Flynn (2<sup>nd</sup> time speaking), 4483 Pine Bay: She states that she appreciates the applicants being here, but they won't be the owners forever and has concerns about the proposed density and the impact on wildlife. She talked to a bird biologist who said that this is a top four area of importance to birds, has a high concentration. She notes that birds are impacted by noise and human proximity and compromises need to be made.

Chair Clovechok called three times for comments and since no other members of the public chose to speak, Chair Clovechok closed the hearing at 8:28 pm.

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**Chair Susan Clovechok**  
**Electoral Area F**

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**Krista Gilbert**  
**Planning Technician**

**Subject:** *Letter of Support - Glamping Project*  
Bylaw #3270 & Bylaw #3271 (Toby Benches / Statham-Widmer)

April 24, 2025

Dear Krista Gilbert,

Please accept this email as my strong letter of support for the proposed glamping project in the Toby Benches area, as outlined in Bylaw #3270 and Bylaw #3271 (Toby Benches / Statham-Widmer).

As a return resident of Invermere, having lived here in the mid-90s for five years and then returning in 2018, I witnessed significant growth in our community. My experience working as the supervisor and acting manager of the childcare at Panorama Mountain Resort for over 10 years (combined) provided me with a deep understanding of the Columbia Valley's tourism sector and the evolving needs of our visitors.

I had direct contact with countless families who consistently seek enriching experiences and lasting memories for their children. Notably, since the onset of COVID-19, there's been a clear surge in parents prioritizing nature-based adventures for their family. They express a strong desire for their children to develop an appreciation for and a genuine connection with the natural world, actively seeking alternatives to screen-dominated activities.

Many parents shared that instilling a respect for the environment in their children now is crucial, as they believe this early exposure will cultivate environmentally conscious adults who value the Earth's well-being. Simultaneously, they articulate a need for a comfortable balance between traditional camping and fully equipped "6 bedroom cabins". They feel that this level of comfort will directly influence their children's positive perception and future advocacy for nature and wildlife.

In this context, the Widmers, with their extensive knowledge of the local area, its history, wildlife, and their demonstrated care for the land, are ideal proponents of the proposed glamping venture.

I firmly believe this glamping project will be a significant asset to our region for several key reasons, particularly in fostering a connection with nature for families:

1. **Facilitating Nature Immersion for Families:** Glamping offers a unique and accessible way for families, even those new to the outdoors, to comfortably immerse themselves in the natural beauty of the Columbia Valley. This positive initial exposure can spark a lifelong appreciation for the environment in children.
2. **Bridging the Comfort Gap:** By providing a comfortable and well-equipped outdoor experience, glamping removes potential barriers for families who might be hesitant about traditional camping. This allows children to experience nature in a positive and enjoyable setting, fostering a desire for future outdoor adventures.

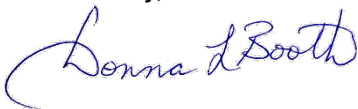
3. **Educational Opportunities:** The Widmers' deep understanding of the local ecology and history presents opportunities for enriching and educational experiences for families, further deepening their connection with the land and its inhabitants.
4. **Cultivating Environmental Stewardship:** Positive early experiences in nature, facilitated by comfortable and engaging accommodations like glamping, can play a crucial role in nurturing environmentally conscious individuals who will advocate for the Earth's well-being in the future.
5. **Community Benefits:** Beyond individual family enrichment, this project can positively impact the broader community by attracting environmentally aware visitors who appreciate and respect the natural environment, contributing to a more sustainable tourism model.

Beyond these specific benefits for families and the environment, the project also offers:

1. **Diversified Accommodation Options:** It will provide a unique and appealing accommodation option beyond traditional hotels and vacation rentals, attracting a wider range of visitors.
2. **Enhanced Visitor Experience:** Glamping offers a comfortable and immersive outdoor experience, aligning perfectly with the natural beauty of the Columbia Valley and appealing to those seeking a connection with nature.
3. **Economic Benefits:** Increased tourism translates to positive economic impacts for local businesses, including restaurants, shops, and activity providers. This project has the potential to generate new revenue streams and support job creation.
4. **Shoulder Season Appeal:** Unique accommodations like glamping can help extend the tourism season beyond the peak summer and winter months, providing a more sustainable economic model.

I am very confident that this project will be a valuable addition to the Columbia Valley, not only enhancing its appeal as a premier destination but also playing a vital role in connecting families with nature and fostering environmental stewardship for generations to come!!

Sincerely,



Donna L. Booth  
1217 13<sup>th</sup> Street  
Invermere, BC

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Phil Burk <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Sunday, April 27, 2025 8:08 AM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Bylaws no. 3270 and 3271

I am writing this email in support of this application if it is downsized to a smaller development(20 units). It bothers me when opposition to change comes at a cost to private land owners just because of the not in my back yard syndrome.

- the statement, it's ag land it should stay in ag land. It seems to me that a small development would have less impacts on the wet lands than the waste of 150 head cows draining unabated into the wetlands.

-This piece of land is too steep and not suitable for a full scale agricultural business, and the fact that the Statham farm has been divided amongst the remaining members of the family make this piece an island in what was a good farm.

-I am not in favour of these changes in its original application, but in a reworked application, say 20 units I feel this could be an asset to our area. We hear all the time about how VRBOs are taking up valuable housing in town, this may relieve that pressure somewhat.

-although I have mixed feelings about tourism, it is a big part of community. This could be a real draw to those people who have never had the opportunity to experience camping, or glamping as some call it.

-Yes it would put more traffic on our road but that is happening anyway. With more traffic may result in people actually doing the speed limit.

-The 5 lot subdivision is outside of WILMER WATERWORKS DISTRICT so would have no impact on the community water system.

-Yes when houses are built it may affect some of the residents view but that is happening everywhere there is development. Again private land and landowners need to be able to get changes to land zoning to be able to make a living.

- the subdivision is answering a need in the area to bring more housing to the area, something that we hear from politicians is drastically lacking in Canada.



**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Sarah Bush [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 30, 2025 8:16 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Bylaw #3270 & Bylaw #3271 (Toby Benches / Statham-Widmer)

> To Krista Gilbert

> Bylaw #3270 & Bylaw #3271 (Toby Benches / Statham-Widmer) Letter of

> Support - Glamping Project

>

> I am writing to express my support for the proposal to develop a geodome glamping area. I believe this proposal offers a balanced approach to land use, one that allows for economic development while prioritizing environmental stewardship.

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> As a trained teacher with a young family and extensive travel experience, I have a deep appreciation for the natural beauty of this valley and the importance of fostering connections with nature. My family and I are very supportive of the geodome glamping proposal overlooking the wetlands.

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> We are confident that the landowners are deeply committed to conserving this area! We believe this development will offer families a unique opportunity to create lasting memories and develop a deeper appreciation for the land. It's more than just a hotel; it's a chance for a real family holiday, made easier by removing the logistical challenges of packing for toddlers to teenagers. The landowners' passion and knowledge will undoubtedly leave a lasting imprint on visitors.

>

> In my opinion, this proposal presents a preferable alternative to other potential development scenarios that might prioritize intensive development without the same level of environmental consideration.

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> I urge you to carefully consider the merits of this proposal.

>

> Sincerely,

>

> Sarah Bush and Family  
> 2030 panorama drive # 302  
> Panorama, British Columbia

Krista Gilbert

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**From:** Colleen Booth <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 24, 2025 10:01 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Letter of Support - Glamping Project

RE: Bylaw #3270 & Bylaw #3271 (Toby Benches / Statham-Widmer)

Dear Ms. Gilbert

This email expresses my enthusiastic support for the proposed glamping project in the Toby Benches area, Bylaw #3270 and Bylaw #3271 (Toby Benches / Statham-Widmer).

My name is Colleen Booth, and I am a resident of Invermere, BC. As an employee of the Columbia Valley Visitor Information Centre, I regularly interact with individuals planning their visits to our beautiful valley. The following reflects my personal impressions and thoughts regarding the proposed Glamping project in the Toby Benches area.

From my perspective, this glamping project will significantly attract visitors and offer them valuable benefits for several key reasons:

- **Unique and Memorable Experience:** Many tourists are actively seeking unique and memorable travel experiences. Glamping offers a blend of outdoor adventure and comfort that stands out from traditional lodging. Currently, there seems to be a higher demand for camping sites with amenities than are available.
- **Connection with Nature:** The Columbia Valley is renowned for its stunning natural environment. Glamping allows visitors to immerse themselves in this beauty in a comfortable and accessible way.
- **Increased Length of Stay:** Offering diverse and appealing accommodation options can encourage visitors to extend their stay in the region, benefiting local businesses and attractions.
- **Attracting New Demographics:** Glamping can appeal to a different segment of the tourism market, including families, couples, and individuals looking for a more nature-based getaway. I anticipate significant interest from those visiting my work place and asking about other opportunities to be close with nature.
- **Commitment to Environmental Stewardship:** Furthermore, a glamping environment is much more respectful of the land and wildlife compared to potential unregulated use. Unfortunately, we often see instances of individuals setting up camp and improperly disposing of garbage, which is detrimental to the natural environment. A managed glamping site, with established guidelines and consistent over seeing, will effectively mitigate these harmful risks.
- **Responsible Land Use:** I also believe that utilizing this land for a well-managed glamping operation is a significantly better alternative to more intensive development such as condominiums.. Such big developments often raise concerns regarding infrastructure capacity and increased strain on local resources.

I firmly believe that this glamping project represents a valuable and environmentally conscious addition to the tourism offerings of the Columbia Valley and will be met with considerable enthusiasm by those who choose to visit our region.

Sincerely,

Colleen

## Krista Gilbert

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**From:** DAVID/SUE STATHAM <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 22, 2025 1:49 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Fwd: Toby Benches/Statham-Widmer

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**From:** "DAVID/SUE STATHAM" <[REDACTED]>  
**To:** "Krista" <Kgilbert@rdek.bc.ca>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 22, 2025 1:38:33 PM  
**Subject:** Fwd: Toby Benches/Statham-Widmer

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**From:** "DAVID/SUE STATHAM" <[REDACTED]>  
**To:** "kg ilbert" <kg.ilbert@rdek.bc.ca>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 22, 2025 1:25:21 PM  
**Subject:** Toby Benches/Statham-Widmer

Krista, We, David & Sue Statham, support Bylaw 3271 Toby Benches Statham/Widmer. This Valley has a great need for this kind of development that is being offered. With more people traveling within Canada, there will be more demand for this type of outdoor experience. Fantastic location to everything our valley has to offer. We live in this area and are sure it will be a great addition to our area, David & Sue Statham

Bylaw #3270 & Bylaw #3271 (Toby Benches / Statham-Widmer)

**Subject:** *Letter of Support - Glamping Project*

Dear Krista Gilbert,

The question before us isn't *if* tourism will grow in our valley, but *how* we will manage its inevitable expansion. To bury our heads in the sand and hope for stagnation is not only unrealistic, it's a disservice to the future of Invermere. This glamping project offers a proactive and intelligent solution, a meticulously researched and thoughtfully designed approach to welcoming visitors in a way that respects and preserves the very essence of what draws them here.

Frankly, the alternative is far more concerning. To deny this proposal is to risk a less controlled, less sustainable form of development – the piecemeal division of land, the erection of private fortresses, and the loss of access to the natural beauty we all cherish. This proposal, in contrast, envisions shared trails, responsible stewardship, and an opportunity for many to experience the valley's wonders, rather than a select few behind "no trespassing" signs.

Approving this glamping project isn't just a good idea; it's a decisive step towards shaping the future of our valley, ensuring its accessibility and preserving its integrity for generations to come. **To reject it would be a profound failure of vision, a choice to surrender control and invite a future we will surely regret.**

Yours truly,

Natasha Friesen

Invermere, BC

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Loy Hetherington <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Friday, April 18, 2025 9:52 AM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Bylaw 3270 and Bylaw 3271

This is in support of Bylaw 3270 and Bylaw 3271 (Toby Benches/ Statham-Widmer)

I am Loy Hetherington and live at 1709 12<sup>th</sup> Ave in Invermere.

I do believe that the Wilmer Glamping is a wonderful idea. It will allow visitors to enjoy all the amenities this valley has to offer and be comfortable in a beautiful space.

Loy Hetherington

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Louise Helmer [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, April 25, 2025 1:38 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** letter of support-RE: BYLAW 3270 AND BYLAW 3271 (TOBY BENCHES/STATHAM-WIDMER)

Dear Krista Gilbert,

RE: BYLAW 3270 AND BYLAW 3271 (TOBY BENCHES/STATHAM-WIDMER)

I am writing to you today to offer my support for the above noted Bylaw Amendment.

I feel the change will be good for the community as a whole.

Thank you,

Louise Helmer  
[REDACTED]  
Invermere, B.C.  
[REDACTED]

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Jade Adams <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 30, 2025 10:55 AM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Letter of Support - Glamping Project

Hello!

I'm writing to you to express my strong support for the proposed glamping development near. I met Marj while I was working at Panorama and it is clear that she genuinely loves the area and has so much history to share and make it more meaningful.

As someone who grew up spending summers and holidays in Invermere and has had the privilege of exploring many beautiful countries around the world, I truly value unique experiences and connecting with nature.

My friends and I, we're all about getting out there, but we also appreciate a bit of comfort! We think this glamping proposal is a fantastic idea.

The landowners have shown a real commitment to doing this in a way that respects the environment, and we appreciate that. Their plan includes some really important things like keeping the development small and low-impact, by limiting the number of geodomes they're planning. And having a solid plan to protect the environment.

What's so great about this proposal is that it lets people really experience nature without having to rough it in a way that can be, let's face it, uncomfortable! For us and many of our friends, glamping would provide that perfect balance: being close to the amazing natural surroundings here but also having the amenities that make each day enjoyable and not a total endurance test. We think it would be an incredible experience. We really hope you'll give this proposal your full support.

Sincerely,

Jade Adams  
Invermere

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Kalie Widmer <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 28, 2025 12:25 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Bylaw Amendment - Toby Benches / Statham-Widmer - Letter of Support

Hello,

I am writing to indicate my support of Bylaw No. 3270 and Bylaw No. 3271 for amendment of OCP designations and zoning designations for those parts of Lot 1, District Lot 375, and Kootenay District, Plan 4119 as outlined on the attached Schedule A of the Public Hearing Notice.

I believe these amendments will result in an increase of desired tourism being brought to the Columbia Valley and increased enjoyment of the wetlands while respecting its sensitivity. Opportunities such as this will financially benefit the community, celebrate the beautiful landscape while maintaining its integrity, and that have minimal impact to nearby residents. This would be a win for the valley in all respects.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kalie Widmer  
Architect, AAA  
[REDACTED]  
Calgary, Alberta  
[REDACTED]



**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Marjorie Widmer <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Friday, April 25, 2025 11:42 AM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Bylaw 3270 & Bylaw 3271

Support Bylaw  
3270 & 3271 (Toby Benches Statham & Widmer)

Good Morning Krista,

I'm writing in support of the above noted application.

A lot of consideration has been put into this application. Along with an unique outdoor experience, taking in the wetlands and wildlife. With careful drawn out plans of trails and viewing benches the park like settings can be enjoyed by all without and impact on this environment.

The small Holdings is a great barrier for local neighbors to ensure all rules and regulations are enforce.

I think there is going to be an increase demand for this type of outdoor experience.

With Kind Regards  
Marjorie Widmer

9369 Westside Rd  
Invermere, B.C.  
[REDACTED]

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Nika Merrick [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, April 25, 2025 9:24 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Re: SUPPORT - Bylaw 3270 and Bylaw 3271

Dear Krista Gilbert,

Re: Bylaw 3270 and Bylaw 3271 "(Toby Benches / Statham-Widmer)"

Bruce Edward Statham / Wilmer B.C.

Hello Ms. Gilbert, and Regional District East Kootenay,

I would like to acknowledge my support for the Statham-Widmer application

My reasons for support are as follows:

This type of project will provide many jobs for the local community.

A campground is also the type of project that will bring an increase in tourism to the area, which will in turn bring more customers to local businesses, as the clientele will be patronizing restaurants, shops, and other services.

The campground is located in a part of Wilmer that includes wildlife and wetlands. Visitors will enjoy the surrounding nature and learn more about the Columbia Valley.

As such, visitors will also be able to gain greater enjoyment of the great outdoors, and the beautiful views of Columbia Valley and surrounding area.

Many thanks,

Nika Statham

RECEIVED

APR 23 2025

Regional District of  
East Kootenay

THE OLD FARM  
9367 Westside Rd.,  
Wilmer, B.C., [REDACTED]  
April 22, 2025

Regional District of East Kootenay  
19-24th Avenue South  
Cranbrook, B.C., V1C 3H8  
ATTN: Krista Gilbert, Planner

SUBJECT: Bylaw 3270 and Bylaw 3271  
(Toby Benches / Statham-Widmer)

Dear Ms. Gilbert:

I am writing to express my support of this application.

The subject land has lots of dry grasses, weeds and decaying trees, I believe, making it a potential for a wildfire.

A Glampground, etc. would help to preserve and hopefully prevent the likelihood for this to happen.

Sincerely,  
Shirley Widmer  
THE OLD FARM

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Bruce Edward Statham <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 16, 2025 9:25 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** SUPPORT - Bylaw 3270 and Bylaw 3271

Dear Krista Gilbert,

“Bylaw 3270 and Bylaw 3271 (Toby Benches / Statham-Widmer)”

Bruce Edward Statham / Wilmer B.C.

SUPPORT the application

reasons for support:

- 1) providing jobs for our local community.
- 2) increasing tourism to the area will bring more customers to local businesses - recreational / food services / parks/services
- 3) educating visitors about the Columbia Valley - wildlife / the wetlands / our indigenous neighbours and the local communities.
- 4) enjoying the great outdoors / the beautiful views of Columbia Valley.

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Jeremy Tomalin-Reeves <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 24, 2025 7:58 AM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** SUPPORT BY-law 3270 and 3271 Toby Benches/Stahem-Widmer)

Good Morning Krista,

Trust all is well.

Writing in support of the above-noted application.

As a long time visitor and condo owner at Panorama Mountain Village delighted to see such an exciting new development in the valley.

My kids and many friends are seeking new travel/vacation experiences in Canada, even more-so with the challenges of visiting the US.

This is exactly the kind of cool experience many are seeking, rather than boring hotel rooms.

It will drive new people to your town and I'm sure boost business from grocery stores, restaurants and rental outlets.

Here's hoping.

Regards

Jeremy

JEREMY TOMALIN-REEVES  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Stanley Wieler [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 22, 2025 11:10 AM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Toby Benches / Statham- Widmer Bylaw 3270 & Bylaw 3271

Good Morning

My name is Stanley Wieler and my address is 9367 Westside Rd.

I am sending this in support of the proposed 5 lot subdivision and specialty nature resort that is being considered by the RDEK board of directors. Bylaw Amendment Toby Benches/Statham-Widmer, Bylaw No. 3270 & Bylaw No. 3271

I believe it will be an improvement to the surrounding areas. I believe the Columbia Valley is in need of more campgrounds and this land would be a good place for one. As it is now this property is not maintained and has a lot of dead timber and tall dead grass that present a fire hazard to the surrounding areas, I am certain that if developed it would be cleaned up, be more visually pleasing and safer and less prone to wild fire.

Thank you  
Stanley Wieler

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Kim/Bruce Willox <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Sunday, April 27, 2025 9:02 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Cc:** Marj Widmer  
**Subject:** statham/widmer bylaw 3270 and bylaw 3271 (toby benches)

To Whom it May Concern

Bruce and I support Marj Widmer and Bruce Statham in their wish to pursue the building of a nature resort on their land. We understand that it is amending bylaw 3270 and 3271. We trust that the Stathams (being long time residents and outdoor enthusiasts) will take great care of our wetlands and surrounding area.

Kim and Bruce Willox  
2221 Stark Lane  
Invermere, B.C.  
[REDACTED]



April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2025

Jon Wilsgard  
4224 Horsethief Rd.  
Wilmer, BC [REDACTED]  
Sent via email to: [kgilbert@rdek.ca](mailto:kgilbert@rdek.ca)

Regional District of East Kootenay  
Development Services Department  
Attention: Krista Gilbert, Planning Technician

It is the purpose of this letter to provide brief commentary and general support for proposed zoning amendment Bylaws 3270 and Bylaw 3271 (Toby Benches / Statham-Widmer) from a local perspective.

Maintaining the form and character of the Wilmer community is imperative; this development will introduce only a limited number of permanent homes and capitalize on the growing commercial trend of 'glamping'. This will facilitate a business opportunity while ensuring environmental sustainability, limited traffic impacts, seasonal and non-motorized activity, all while keeping such activity below the Wilmer townsite.

My support for these amendments and therefore the proposed development is premised on the inevitability of eventual development of these private properties, and concluding that the scope and nature of the proposals represent the least environmentally and socially impacting from the context of the existing Wilmer community, while introducing an amenable experiential, and educational business opportunity.

Note that if further residential development, the introduction of private vehicle RV camping, motorized and all year use were included in this or any future proposal, I would be firmly opposed to these amendment bylaws.

To these ends, I believe the proposed development and the required authorizing amendment bylaws uphold and maintain the value of this land, representing an acceptable change to its landscape and intensity of use.

Sincerely,

*Jon Wilsgard*  
Wilmer Resident

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Silvia Statham [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 29, 2025 10:28 AM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Statham / Widmer Toby Benches Proposal Bylaw 3270 & 3271

To whom it may concern

We are not affected by the proposed bylaws and have no rejection to the Statham/ Widmer Toby Benches proposal.

Sincerely  
Statham Thomas & Silvia

Sent from my iPhone

Kalyn Adams

9194 Delphine Ave, East Kootenay G (Wilmer)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

April 28, 2025

Regional District of East Kootenay

**Subject: Opposition to Zoning Amendment Application for Lot 1, District Lot 375, Kootenay District, Plan 4119 - Proposed Eco-Lodge in Wilmer, BC**

Dear Chair and Directors of the Regional District of East Kootenay,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed zoning amendment application for Lot 1, District Lot 375, Kootenay District, Plan 4119, that would facilitate the development of a five-lot residential subdivision and a "specialty nature resort" (eco-lodge) just south of Wilmer townsite, on Westside Road. As a resident of Wilmer, I have significant concerns regarding the potential negative impacts this development would have on our community and the surrounding environment.

My primary concern lies with the proximity of the proposed development to the Columbia Wetlands, an internationally recognized Ramsar site and one of the largest and most ecologically significant wetlands in North America. These wetlands provide critical habitat for a vast array of migratory birds and numerous other wildlife species. The establishment of an eco-lodge in such close proximity poses a significant threat to this delicate ecosystem through habitat disturbance, increased human activity, and the risk of pollution. Furthermore, the area in question serves as an important animal corridor, and increased development would inevitably fragment this crucial pathway, impacting local wildlife populations.

Beyond the environmental implications, I have serious concerns regarding the capacity of our local infrastructure to support a development of this nature. The source of water for the lodge and the plans for wastewater management, including septic systems, need to be carefully scrutinized. Our existing infrastructure is designed for a small, rural community and may not be able to sustainably accommodate the increased demand.

The **Westside Road**, the primary access route to our community, is not designed to handle a significant increase in traffic. This is particularly concerning given the proximity to the

intersection at Panorama Drive & 3rd Street, which already experiences considerable congestion and safety issues during the summer months. An increase in traffic associated with an eco-lodge would exacerbate these problems and could lead to dangerous situations.

I am also deeply concerned about the potential cultural impact on the local Indigenous communities. It is imperative that any development in this area fully respects Indigenous rights, title, and cultural heritage. I would like to request clear information on the consultations that have taken place with local Indigenous Nations and the specific accommodations that are being made to address their concerns and protect culturally significant sites.

The overall safety and character of our small, close-knit community are also at risk. The increased movement of people in and out of the area could impact the sense of security and tranquility that residents currently enjoy.

Furthermore, I am worried about the potential for increased property values to make our community unaffordable for long-term residents. While some may see increased property values as a benefit, it can displace those who have lived here for generations and contribute to the erosion of our community's social fabric.

Finally, it is crucial to consider the strain on our local healthcare system. The Invermere and District Hospital already experiences significant capacity issues, with emergency room wait times often exceeding eight hours during peak seasons. The addition of a tourism-based business would likely further burden our limited healthcare resources, especially as we lack a local walk-in clinic. The fragile ecosystem of our region is inherently linked to the well-being of our community, and any development must prioritize its preservation.

For all these reasons, I strongly urge the RDEK to reject this proposed zoning amendment for Lot 1, District Lot 375, Kootenay District, Plan 4119. The potential negative environmental, infrastructural, cultural, safety, and socio-economic impacts on Wilmer and the surrounding area are simply too significant to ignore. I respectfully request that you carefully consider these concerns and prioritize the long-term well-being of our community and the protection of our invaluable natural environment.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely, Kalyn Adams

## Krista Gilbert

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**From:** Baiba Morrow [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, April 28, 2025 4:30 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Bylaw Amendments No. 3270-3271 - Toby Benches

I have lived in Wilmer for 18 years and am proud to be an engaged community member in the Columbia Valley.

I am against this proposal on many fronts. I respectfully ask you to deny or, at minimum, defer the application to re-designate 40 acres from Rural-Resource to Small-Holdings/Commercial-Recreation and to rezone it A-2 → SH-1/NR-1. If the project fails, NR-1 zoning remains: the door is open for an even larger commercial use. Wilmer and the Columbia Valley are already being affected negatively from incremental rezonings, shoreline build-outs and motor-sport creep. The APC has already rejected the proposal.

The proposed development would sever a vital wildlife corridor. Elk, mule deer, and black bears already rely on this 40-acre strip for movement. Research shows that even low-intensity human recreation can reduce large mammal use of a corridor by 30–60%. The developer's environmental report is not peer-reviewed and remains unavailable for public scrutiny.

Traffic safety has not been adequately addressed in the proposal. Every time I drive up and down the road into Wilmer, I shudder to think about vehicles from out of town trying to enter and exit the site on a steep and winding corner. It's dangerous. Also, the lack of a biking lane for the growing number riders on the road makes it dangerous for cyclists.

There is ground-water and septic risk to the Columbia Wetlands. We all know that water security must be seriously addressed in this era of climate change. Ninety serviced pads would draw roughly 90 m<sup>3</sup> / day from the same aquifer that feeds Wilmer's community well, then release nutrient-rich effluent upslope from a RAMSAR-class wetland. A phosphorus bump of just 3–4 µg/L has already been enough to trigger algaeblooms on nearby Lake Windermere.

Serious questions remain unanswered about the use of the site (it's a complicated landscape), including water and sewer capacity, increased traffic, community safety, and overall disturbance.

In closing, this project is far too intensive for a property bordering a small community like Wilmer. At what point do the rights of existing residents to maintain their rural way of life get overrun by, in my opinion, a speculative and inappropriate business venture that will threaten the integrity of our wetlands and wildlife?

Thank you,

Baiba Morrow

Wilmer

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Karen Barkley <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Friday, April 25, 2025 9:30 AM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Bylaw Amendments No. 3270-3271 - Toby Benches

Hello.

Im writing to express my concerns about the bylaw amendment No. 3270-3271. The area under consideration is next to a very critical wildlife habitat and the proposed development has the potential to negatively impact that important area. My major concern is that the bylaw change does not guarantee that the proposed development will be what is constructed, with the change in bylaw the landowner could then do whatever they want on the property.

Additionally, as a Wilmer resident, I use the road daily and am very concerned with the safety of the roadway. It is a winding hilly road with no shoulders and the increased traffic and no turning lane is a frightening prospect, particularly with drivers not familiar with the area.

Wilmer is a quiet, resident community. This type of development does not fit with the character of the community.

Overall my greatest concern is in a warming world, one of the most important habitats that we need to protect are wetlands. Encroachment on to what is a quickly disappearing ecosystem has serious negative impacts on biodiversity, and our own security from wildfires.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment.

Karen Barkley  
Wilmer resident

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Karen Barkley  
[REDACTED]

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Bryon Benn <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 28, 2025 12:29 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Bylaw Amendments No. 3270-3271 - Toby Benches"

Hi Krista

These are my comments regarding the proposed "glamping and subdivision project" and bylaw amendments.

No Socio-economic assessment was completed. How will this project affect the local residents vs the economic benefits? This is an oversight. There are many questions that need better answers regarding use of the site, including water and sewer issues, increased traffic and related community disturbance and safety issues and how will this proposed amendment change set a precedent for future development proposals that don't fit with current zoning by laws.

This project is too intensive for a property adjacent to a small community like Wilmer. When do the rights of local residents to a chosen rural lifestyle get superceded by, in my opinion, another exploitive business proposal?

This is far from a "nature resort."

There are several environmental issues that are glossed over.

As is a problem with most environmental assessments, this one deals essentially with the property itself. The larger issues such as how an intensive project such as this affects the bigger picture.. the ungulate winter range, wildlife movement corridor and adjacent world renowned Columbia Valley Wetlands.. is lacking. There is no consideration of cumulative environmental effects in the larger landscape.

Endangered and threatened species and habitat, as per the BC Wildlife Act and federal Species at Risk Act and associated schedules, have been identified on the property. This project will negatively impact them.

This by-law amendment, allowing such an intensive project immediately adjacent to the Columbia wetlands with its critical habitats for many listed and migratory species should not be approved.

Thank you

Bryon Benn

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** JennyB [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, April 25, 2025 10:10 AM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Bylaw Amendments No. 3270-3271 - Toby Benches

Good morning,

I want to formally express my opposition to this proposed amendment.

I am a fulltime resident in Wilmer and have many concerns about a variety of impact it will have to our community and our sensitive wetlands.

Thank you,

Jenny Bueckert  
9152 Mays Ave, Wilmer  
[REDACTED]



**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Alison Brown <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Friday, April 25, 2025 12:59 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** By Law Amendments #3270-3271 Toby Benches

Hello Krista,

I am writing as I am unable to attend the public meeting on April 30 regarding the proposed zoning by law change in the Columbia Wetlands Wildlife Management Area of Wilmer.

This proposal has already been taken down years ago and now the proponent has found a way to open the possibility of a development in this sensitive area again. The benefit to the pockets of some are far outweighed by the devastation and the disruptions to those that will be affected by the development proposed.

I am writing on behalf of the vulnerable, voiceless residents (wetland inhabitants) of the wildlife corridor for another rejection of this proposal. Respectfully let Nature be. Reject this proposal and maintain the magnificent land to be enjoyed by wildlife. This area is world renowned, proven by the influx of naturalists who quietly observe the abundance of life during the annual Wings Over the Rockies events.

There are also concerns to be raised about the increase of traffic on the road toward Wilmer and the disruptions the additional traffic will have on the residents of Wilmer.

Sincerely, Alison Brown Bruce Dehart (Invermere, BC)



Subject: RDEK By-Law Amendment Application – File P732 588      April 28, 2025  
Bruce Statham, Marjorie & Kalie Widmer  
Lot 1, District Lot 375, Kootenay District Plan 4119  
PID:014-920-221

The Columbia Wetlands Stewardship Partners (CWSP) is responding to a requested amendment to the OCP under Bylaw No. 3270 and No. 3271. The following are our concerns for the flora and fauna of the adjacent wetlands and relate to the particulars of the application.

#### Development Agreement

The proponent refers to registering a covenant on the property to protect and conserve various wildlife features, habitats and to protect the adjacent wetlands. There is no mention of who the covenant would be registered with and what specifically would be covered under such a covenant. As this is a suggested covenant on private property there is a cost associated to monitor that covenant which needs to be borne annually by the private landowner and not the public.

Such a covenant needs to have more details on what it speaks to, that it is in perpetuity along with what is noted above so the public can comment before this application moves forward.

#### Property Information

The applicant wishes to change the OCP designation of RR (Rural Resource) to CR (Commercial Recreation) and further change the Zoning to allow for residential properties as well as a large area for a lodge, glamping and cottage like structures. The question to be asked should the proposal fail to fruition is what becomes of the property since the zoning allows for uses other than what is being applied for? There needs to be some guidance and guarantees by the RDEK, should this application be approved, so that if the applicant does not fulfill the proposed project, then the property will revert to the RR designation. This has been done in many other situations and maintains credibility in the OCP and Zoning process put before the community.

The applicant brings up the topic of wildlife connectivity corridors, wildlife habitat, riparian areas, wetlands and the need create buffers in and around these areas. The applicant has not provided any guidance or outlined any of these areas in the application thus it is difficult to impossible to comment regarding a proposed covenant or offer advice on how to manage. There is a need to have the applicant carry out this mapping and classification function, especially as it relates to Species at Risk and critical habitat present on the property. Upon receiving this information, the applicant then can be directed to the various laws and regulations and implement into the development the guarantees these will be meant prior should any rezoning going forward.

There is no known sewage system for the area where human waste and grey water are piped to a government regulated sewage treatment facility. Although the applicant states they will comply with the Sewage System Regulation, the property contains steep terrain throughout the entire property with slope grades of 21% in the permanent housing section and 11% - 17% throughout the glamping and cottage planned area. This raises a big concern for the eventual entrance of contamination from the ground sewage systems into the adjacent Columbia Wetlands, which lie downhill and immediate to the planned development. The concern for associated medications and drugs which end up in human waste are recognized as a real concern entering the environment as well there is the concern for possible algae blooms in the wetland's waters adjacent to the development over time. A development of this size needs to have an onsite sewage treatment facilities which are available for developments of this size. The alternative is to have all sewage contained in cement holding tanks and removed by a sewage removal service to a government regulated deposit area/facility.

#### Professional Studies

We are surprised at the less than accurate information provided and/or being suggested regarding possible impacts caused by this intended development. CWSP has been and still is very active with research and funding studies within the Columbia Wetlands regarding Badgers, Lewis Woodpeckers and other Species at Risk and of concern. To say the development is not anticipated to affect the movement of Badgers is not supported by current field observations. Badgers have a territory in which they track and prey on their primary food source of Columbia Ground Squirrels. With the scale of development and intended increased human presence the ground squirrel population will be impacted with a downturn in population numbers or the possible elimination. This will very well result in less badger use of the property and cause their use of this area to be less except for the possible transition through the property in search of food elsewhere. There will be an impact to the badger population.

Lewis Woodpecker is a Species at Risk. Once again field observations by researchers and bird survey crews have shown repeatedly that Lewis Woodpeckers are quite shy during nesting cavity selection. As well during nesting and young feeding time the birds are very shy to human activity at or near their nesting cavity. The adults bringing food to the young will pause away but within sight of the cavity nest waiting for an opportunity to reach the cavity when less human activity is present. This in turn causes less nourishment arriving for the chicks in a constant and timely matter. As these birds are migratory it is very important for young of the year to reach proper fitness and weight to make the journey south. There is little doubt with the human numbers and time of year the development will be active, there is a high probability that any Lewis Woodpecker currently using the site will be adversely affected.

There is a brief statement regarding a fence and human control into the wetlands. It is noted on one of the maps (2.1) a split rail fence. If this is the intended fence, it is an unrealistic expectation that a split rail fence will stop people from going into the adjacent wetland and disturbing birds. There certainly are concerns with human presence affecting wildlife at certain times of the year particularly during nesting, rearing, calving and fawning and especially with some species at risk. This needs further investigation by the developer to deliver a better understanding to the RDEK at what needs to be provided to address human interaction from the property into the adjacent wetlands.

#### Additional Information

Missing in the application is how garbage will be handled as well as litter arriving in the adjacent wetlands. With the development of this nature there will be people from all walks of life using the site, some aware of nature's needs and others not. The smell of food becomes an attractant, ending often with a problem wildlife situation developing with wildlife being the loser. It is not just bears but other wildlife such as skunks, crows and ravens. Should the development go ahead there is a regulatory need to have proper wildlife proof garbage containers, and no food items allowed in the glamping structures with cloth sides or roof structures. A waste management plan needs to be developed by the applicant to show how garbage will be handled, the problem of wildlife will be mitigated, how food will be contained/stored, picnic table protocol and BBQ's.

As mentioned, nothing is being said regarding litter control and removal of litter coming from the development onto the adjacent wetlands. The applicant needs to be reminded as well as all that the adjacent Columbia Wetlands Wildlife Management Area is a RAMSAR

site making it a wetland of international significance and important to the international wetlands system. Camping sites are notorious for litter drift onto adjoining properties so this needs to be addressed by the applicant as what is their plan to take care of this problem, should this application be approved.

A final point of concern lies with invasive species. The applicant mentions the RDEK has regulations in place, and they state nothing further with regard how this concern will be managed on their property. Invasive species are of great concern to CWSP and their impact on the wetlands once introduced. The applicant will have guests coming to the facilities from many areas and little doubt using the trails, walkways and general open areas where invasive species can be easily transferred from clothing, walking shoes, pets, equipment, etc. There is no mention of how guests will be instructed nor what will be in place to make sure items are cleaned prior to using the trails, walkways and open areas. A development of this size and encouraging high numbers of guests needs to have an invasive species plan in place with educational material and equipment to remove invasive being carried onto the property, a daily/weekly/monthly detection and removal plan and reporting all invasive species found and removed to both the RDEK and the management authority for the Columbia Wetlands Wildlife Management Area.

CWSP does not support this application until the above noted concerns are addressed and put in place should the application for rezoning be granted.

Columbia Wetlands Stewardship Partners  
Box 81  
Brisco, BC  
V0A 1B0

## Krista Gilbert

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**From:** Invermere Tree Care <invermeretreecare@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, April 26, 2025 2:43 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Cc:** Roberta Schnider  
**Subject:** Bylaw Amendments No 3270-3271 - Tony Benches

Attention: Krista Gilbert, Planning Technician

Re: Public Hearing Notice - Pioneer Apr 24/2025

Regarding the Subject Bylaw changes, please accept this email as my official opposition to the changes from A-2 to SH-1 and A-2 to NR-1.

RR to SH- my objection if due to inadequate water supply for more than one (1) residence.

RR to SH & CR, Commercial - my objection is to loss of native habitat, vegetation and wildlife corridor and appropriate water usage.

Dave Meadows  
Edgewater, BC  
VOA 1E0

Sent from my iPhone

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Ian Dewey [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, April 28, 2025 4:36 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Columbia Wetlands Wildlife Management Area

Good afternoon,

I am writing to object to the proposal to turn that 40 acre parcel at Wilmer into a "glamping" spot. The wildlife in the area will agree. We need to conserve, not develop.

Our wetlands deserve as much conservation as we can manage and we already have too much traffic along those winding roads.

Thank you for your attention.

Ian Dewey  
Invermere

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Monica Dragosz <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 28, 2025 9:17 AM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Bylaw Amendments No. 3270-3271 - Toby Benches

Hi there,

I can't say enough how much this needs to be a hard no. This area is a critical habitat for not only migrating birds, but birds that nest there as well. Nesting birds will be extremely sensitive to human disturbance. There are also many species that rely on this habitat to overwinter here as well. Given the size and scale of the development proposal, I cannot see how this would not have an extremely negative impact on this ecosystem. The birds and bird life and intact Columbia wetlands are part of what makes the Columbia Valley the unique place that it is.

It seems to me that the Columbia Valley is at a critical juncture - in which there is still opportunity to value the local ecosystems and wonderful biodiversity that exist here. Any development that occurs needs to be carefully considered for the impact on local ecosystems, and should happen on the smallest of scales. There is a lot at stake. I also think there are plenty of lessons to be learned from other mountain communities, who rode the waves of development at great peril to their local ecosystems and biodiversity.

It is disturbing to me that developers continually come back with ways to manipulate systems and obscure the effects that their plans will have. I hope the RDEK can see past this and say no to this proposal.

Sincerely,  
Monica Dragosz



**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Sam Drouin [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, April 25, 2025 6:24 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** "Bylaw Amendments 3270-3271 - Toby Benches"

Objection not cool

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, April 28, 2025 4:15 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Bylaw Amendments No. 3270-3271 - Toby Benches, AKA "The Wilmer Glamping Proposal"

Dear Krista,

I am a property owner in Wilmer and would like to object to the bylaw amendments identified as Bylaw Amendments No. 3270-3271 - Toby Benches. My family's enjoyment of the area will be negatively affected by such a dramatic change in zoning. My reasons for objecting include the following notes.

#### UNNACCEPTABLE INCREASE IN HUMAN USE

1/ Human use of the landscape in the Wilmer has increased in recent years and is affecting both the environment and the nature of the traditional enjoyment of the landscape by the community. This new proposal has potential to create a dramatic increase in demand for use of the area. This zoning change should not be approved without first developing a detailed human use plan for the Wilmer area that respects the quality of experience for the local community and the need to protect very sensitive physical and biological components of the landscape.

2/ These are very dry easily eroded slopes which, at times, can be exposed to very strong winds, especially in the context of warming climate. The loss of sensitive soils and accelerating erosion on similar sites in the area is resulting from increasing intensity of human use and provides examples of environmental degradation that can occur from increased human use and be very difficult to reclaim once damage has occurred. Risk of damage to these slopes should be avoided.

#### IMPACT ON UTILITIES

3/ In times of climate change it is import to understand energy relationships of new developments. Wilmer has questionable electricity service at present. How will the increased four-season demand affect the electrical demand and supply to the community?

4/ Before this zoning change can be considered there must be a detailed analysis and clear understanding of how sewage handling and design will prevent potential surface and groundwater contamination of the adjacent wetlands and how long-term monitoring will be conducted to determine if any concerns arise and how any upsets in the function of a proposed system will be addressed without affecting the wetlands and riparian zones.

#### CONCERNS FOR CUMULATIVE IMPACT ON ECOSYSTEMS

5/ The environmental analysis and description is based on very short-term investigations, with minimal field observation and is essentially a desktop exercise. Protecting the RAMSAR status Wilmer wetlands deserve better. As long-term occupiers of this special landscape we are obligated to be much more diligent in our efforts to understand the effects of our continued and cumulative intrusions into the Columbia Valley wetland ecosystem. Without credible long-term ecosystem monitoring it is impossible for Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK) to come to valid conclusions about the impacts developments such as the one being proposed. Without this science-based understanding of impact to the site, any suggestions of environmental mitigative measures are simply self-fulfilling, wishful thinking. This perspective is supported by the disclaimer of the authors of the report, who are aware of the report's limitations by liberal use of the term "may" with respect to environmental conditions and the inclusion of the following statement:

*"The report is based on and limited by circumstances, conditions and information available at the time work was completed. The recommendations of this report are based in part on information provided by others. VAST believes this information is accurate but cannot guarantee or warrant its accuracy or completeness."*

#### LACK OF USE OF COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE

6/ Community knowledge is a fundamental part of environmental assessment. There is no attempt to include community knowledge in the environmental report yet this area of the Columbia Valley has a wealth of community members with excellent knowledge of the local environment. Without inclusion of community knowledge RDEK can have no confidence that there is enough available information to support approval of this zoning change.

#### WILDLIFE

7/ Great Horned Owl have been observed using this site in multiple years.

8/ Common Nighthawks, species of special concern, are active in the area and can be heard in the Wilmer area during breeding season. What is the REDEK policy for preventing cumulative loss of habitat for this species? One wonders what other community knowledge could flush out our understanding of this parcel of land.

9/ Analysis of bird nesting windows is marginally relevant to this zoning decision. It is easy to say construction activities can avoid nesting windows. A more difficult and important question, and one that is more relevant in considering this zoning change, is whether once the site is developed if any nesting habitat is permanently lost. In addition, will human use be an ongoing disturbance during nesting season on this, and adjacent land, once the development is complete? If so, what is the cumulative long-term loss of that nesting habitat in the Wilmer area?

10/ The environmentally sensitive area assessment does not adequately discuss the importance of interactions between the wetlands and adjacent terrestrial habitats. Upland terrestrial sites are used as foraging, and other needs for species that also use wetlands. The beautiful Dragonflies and Damselflies that inhabit the Wilmer area in summer are good examples. Some waterfowl nest far from wetlands. Before any bylaw change can be considered there must be a credible discussion of the cumulative disturbance and loss of terrestrial habitat adjacent to wetland habitats in the Wilmer area, and within RDEK generally. Before this zoning change can be made, RDEK must first put it into the context of its policy with respect to protecting the ecological interaction between wetlands and adjacent terrestrial sites and how zoning decisions provide for protection from the ongoing cumulative effects of developments on these interacting ecosystems.

11/ How will this development change wildlife movement patterns? Understanding how wildlife move through a given landscape is complex ecologic science and can only be determined with any confidence through long term monitoring. Thus, the importance of wildlife movement corridors is inadequately addressed in the environmentally sensitive site analysis. Before any zoning change can be considered it is important to have real data about how wildlife use the parcel to both move along the wetland alignment as well as move back and forth between upland sites and the wetlands here and on adjacent lands in the Wilmer area.

12/ More data is required to assess whether this or similar zoning changes, alone or cumulatively, will cause any change in wildlife movement patterns that result in increased road mortality or result in an increase in negative human-wildlife interactions, including public safety concerns, associated with development on this parcel or in the neighbouring residential areas of the Wilmer hamlet. Interesting wildlife movement research is being conducted in the southeast corner of the RDEK and should be duplicated here before such significant zoning changes are made.

#### VIEWSCAPES

13/ This development will be clearly visible from the road approach to Athalmer over the outlet of Lake Windermere. It is quite likely this viewscape change will be significant from other vantage points and will be significant in presenting

Wilmer and surrounding communities as an increasingly urbanized setting. This change is out of character with current zoning and quite likely with how residents perceive their environment. A viewscape impact analysis should be completed before any zoning change occurs to ensure residents understand the visual impacts of this proposal.

## ZONING

13/ The proposal strays too far from the objective of current land use zoning and conflicts with the character of the established community.

14/ The Regional District of East Kootenay has much to be proud of in terms of offering natural experiences and environments to residents and visitors. This is one of the foundations of the local economy and an important element in Wilmer's community character that should not be put at risk by such a dramatic land use change.

15/ If RDEK is to consider zoning changes they should not be based on any independent proposal that comes along. A zoning change should be carefully considered independent of any special request and be considered in the context of the overall planning objectives for the area. To that end, if it is determined that current zoning is not meeting community needs, the public should be presented with alternative zoning proposals that might meet community needs. Before this one-off zoning change is considered, please present a set of alternative zoning options for the community to consider.

## CONCLUSION

I respectfully ask that you terminate consideration of this zoning change and development density proposal. Further, before any other such change to the greater Wilmer environment be considered, the regional District of East Kootenay should plan and conduct a long-term environmental inventory and assessment and zoning review of the area in order to be diligent in documenting the community and environmental characteristics that are to be desired by the community in the future. This work will help to update and provide informed guidance for future of land use decisions in an area that is likely to see more proposals for dramatic land and human use change.

Thankyou for your consideration of these concerns.

Peter Duck, BSc. , M.E.S.

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** daniel eastabrook [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, April 28, 2025 11:34 AM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Fwd: Glamping Development near Wilmer

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** daniel eastabrook <[REDACTED]>  
**Date:** Mon, Apr 28, 2025, 11:21  
**Subject:** Glamping Development near Wilmer  
**To:** Michele Bates <[mbates@rdek.bc.ca](mailto:mbates@rdek.bc.ca)>, <[kgilbert@redk.bc.ca](mailto:kgilbert@redk.bc.ca)>, Roberta Schnider <[director.schnider@rdek.bc.ca](mailto:director.schnider@rdek.bc.ca)>, <[director.clovechok@rdek.bc.ca](mailto:director.clovechok@rdek.bc.ca)>

I feel that developing the proposed camping village is contrary to the interests of our Community.

For a strictly selfish reason; it will bring a large increase in traffic on the stretch of road between Toby Creek and Wilmer.

I am a full-time resident and property owner since 2002 and all season outdoor user and observer; walking, cycling and paddling, skating and snowshoeing.

The area containing the proposed development, together with the hayfields and steep forested areas East of Wilmer serve as an important wildlife corridor. I have seen elk, mule and whitetail deer, beavers, muskrats and a large diversity of birds. I regularly see signs of badgers and bears. Once I saw a vole, swimming across the flooded wetlands; apparently it's a common mode of travel. Three years ago this fall, Wilmer was visited by an adult grizzly bear. The Conservation Officers were able to scare it away up into the hills. I cannot imagine that with the addition of dozens of campers, potentially unfamiliar with bear activities and outdoor cooking; the outcome of that bear would be so positive.

We have witnessed the increased threat of wildfire, (Wilmer has its own active Firesmart program) has the proponent submitted any proactive plan to mitigate the increased risk due to more outdoor users?

My final point is regarding environmental stewardship: In a time when we should be becoming more aware of the importance of protecting wetlands and headwaters, should we be developing a site which should certainly remain in or be returned to Agricultural Land Reserve? Does it deserve protection as Environmentally Sensitive Area? A few years ago, a small area near Munn Lake was unfortunately removed from this protective zoning.

It has recently come to my attention that the developer wants to include 5 large building lots as a buffer zone (buffer from what?). These lots would, no doubt be sold at a premium price; homes built there will be beyond the means of anyone who actually needs a home in the area. Although I am not advocating for this at the proposed site, I am certain that many local families would likely find it more palatable to see smaller lots where more modest homes could be placed.

In conclusion, may I ask; why must we develop every unoccupied space?

Please consider these thoughts and facts when deciding whether to rezone this property.

Thank you and best regards,  
Daniel Eastabrook  
9189 West Ave

April 28, 2025

RE: Toby Benches / Statham-Widmer  
Bylaw Amendment 3270 & 3271

To the RDEK Board,

I am writing in regards to the proposed Bylaw amendments 3270 & 3271. I have numerous concerns regarding a commercial venture on this section of Westside Road (from Toby Creek Road to Wilmer). Though this meeting is for the zoning change, it is the potential negative impact on its closest neighbors and the small “bedroom” community of Wilmer, the type of businesses that is developed on the property. The current proposal is for a tourist driven “Glamping”.

The road to Wilmer is on a hill, narrow with blind corners. On paper there appears to be many options for access onto the property; in reality, it is extremely limited due to safety and visibility. At the Open House held at Wilmer Community Hall December 5, 2024, the proposed access points were disputed as they encroached the adjacent properties. Even if the development was to heavily invest in reshaping the hills and depressions to gain access elsewhere, the roadway would still be an issue.

The road is multi-use. The shoulders are narrow and there are no sidewalks. An increase of traffic by drivers unfamiliar with road and potential hazards (wildlife, cyclists, walkers etc.) will increase the amount of accidents and road closures. With this being the only paved road to access Wilmer, residents north of the property may not receive the help of emergency services, which could be fatal.

Fires are also a major issue. Currently, the property does not have access to running water. Though stated that it does have a well, what are the requirements for a business of any type for fire suppression? Does their well contain enough water and flow rate to suppress the flames? Will this be enough to protect the surrounding residents and wildlife? The proposed business for the property, vastly increases a risk of a wildfire, whether they allow campfires, or not. Entitled, naïve, ignorant, and careless people will do what they want, rules and fines be damned. Those who have been around tourism long enough, know this to be true!

If the proposed change does go through, what will be done to protect the wetlands? A representative at the Open House told me “it’s just a swamp”. This was an uneducated and ignorant response to my concern. We are along a vital wetland corridor that provides habitat and benefits to the valley wildlife. It also provides flood & drought protection along with natural filtration. What will the RDEK do to ensure the wetlands are not contaminated, abused and adulterated? Who will be held accountable?

For the proposed change to commercial, should the parties in question be required to invest in the infrastructure prior to development? Should they not have to prove that they have the services in place and all upgrades be completed before opening for business? Tax payers should not have to foot the bill to upgrade the road. Users of Wilmer Water Works should not foot the bill for upgrades required for a commercial development.

Wilmer and this section of Westside Road is not a tourist destination. It is one of the last pockets in the valley for locals and 2<sup>nd</sup> home owners who want to live in a small quiet community, free from the frenzy of the commercial and tourist sector.

Thank You,

Stacy Eaton  
9290 Westside Road  
Invermere BC



**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Fritz Reisle [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, April 28, 2025 2:02 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Bylaw Amendments No. 3270-3271 - Toby Benches

I am writing to you to express my concern about this enormous "Glamping" site proposal in Wilmer. Once again developers were able to remove farmland out of the ALR back in 2006 and now want to rezone again to commercial. The RDEK does not seem to put any value in this "reserve". The Reserve was created to protect this type of land from developers and the public expects the RDEK to respect it.

The proposed development also reaches into a protected wild life area inhabited by beavers but also migratory birds as well as deer and elk. The proposal caters to tourists specifically, of which we have no shortage in are area. Tourists contribute greatly to the valley economy but also to the environmental destruction and the pressure on wild life. Respect for the environment can't really be enforced as is evident on every walk I take I come across more garbage than I can possibly carry.

Also our traffic infrastructure in this area is totally insufficient for such a development.

Fritz Reisle



**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** jane fleet [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Saturday, April 26, 2025 7:03 AM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Rezoning wetlands

I would like to express my concern regarding proposed bylaw amendment 3270-3271 Toby benches I absolutely disagree with the concept that a developer can buy land knowing it is zoned a certain way and then ask for it to be changed If an area is to be re-zoned it should be done by the district proactively not at the request of a developer

A well for 100 glamping huts?

Are you aware of the number of ponds that have gone dry on the benches in the last 20 years?

This area must be protected from development I can't imagine the damage that hundreds of people will do to the fragile ecosystem

Say no

Sincerely  
Dr Jane Fleet

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Natalie forrest <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Sunday, April 27, 2025 11:37 AM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Bylaw Amendments 3270-3271 – Toby Benches

Dear Whom It May Concern (well that's all of us that live on/near Columbia Wetlands).

I am aghast that this proposal got this far. We are in a very special area that needs to be protected not exploited. I know that many of us that live here are getting tired of having to fight the same issues - #overtourism and misuse of an area that should be fully protected.

Columbia River Wetlands is a value to our community (and beyond) that far exceeds any benefit a small number of humans may get from developing this area in that way. The detrimental effects would be irreversible. From nesting areas to blue listed species, to the general malaise of squeezing Nature to adapt yet again, taking away yet another corridor.

This also sets a precedence that concerns me, and is going in the opposite direction of what the human and natural community needs to be healthy.

Please consider more than the small amount of profit to a few humans when taking this under further consideration.

Thank you

Natt Forrest, Ph.D, CYA-RYT-E-Gold, TMRc

[REDACTED]  
[www.movingwell.ca](http://www.movingwell.ca)

[www.EcoYogaTherapy.com](http://www.EcoYogaTherapy.com)

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Barry & Lu Gillies - [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, April 28, 2025 1:08 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Bylaw Amendments No. 3270-3271 - Toby Benches

Dear Krista:

We are writing to express opposition to the proposed bylaw amendment that would allow a development of the magnitude proposed by Haworth Consulting on behalf of Statham and Widmer that would be located near the Wilmer townsite. We appreciate the opportunity to share with you our concerns.

A major concern for us would be the accessibility of patrons to an especially vulnerable part of the Columbia Wetlands, particularly during the critical period for nesting and rearing of chicks. It would be impossible to bar people from hiking and paddling during that time and to instill a respect for the Wetlands at any time. We emphasize that the Columbia Wetlands are considered to be a wetland of international importance and this development gives patrons easy access to the wetlands.

We are concerned that this development will obstruct the movement of wildlife and affect habitat connectivity.

Another primary question for us would be the safety of having such an increase in traffic on that road leading up to Wilmer and this development.

We are not Wilmer residents but we support those who are concerned that this development will alter the local rural character and lifestyle.

Thank you for taking the time to read our concerns. We will attend the public meeting on Wednesday so that we stay well informed.

Sincerely,  
Luana and Barry Gillies  
Windermere

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Paul Glassford <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Friday, April 25, 2025 2:45 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Bylaw Amendment 3270 - 3271 Toby benches

I have been a local Realtor in the valley for 25 years and I completely object to this re zoning proposal.  
Please contact me for any additional info.

Thank you  
Paul Glassford PREC  
MaxWell Rockies Realty  
[REDACTED]

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Leonard Goulet <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Sunday, April 27, 2025 8:09 AM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Bylaw amendments 3270-3271-toby benches

Can you send the info packages regarding this amendment.i am opposed for environmental concerns.

Leonard goulet

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Justin Charity Gabryle and Brooklynne Nielsen <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 28, 2025 3:58 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Toby Benches / Statham-Widmer Rezoning (glamping)

Hello,

My name is Justin Nielsen and I live next to the property that has applied to be rezoned. I have several concerns about the rezoning to a commercial property.

First concern is that road is very narrow with limited visibility and no shoulders. Even with the current traffic that is heading into the woods to go camping it can be difficult because people are afraid of the steep embankment on the North bound lane. This is something that the residents are aware of and we drive with more attention than others do based on this. The road doesn't really have any room for a shoulder which does cause the current people that are walking on Westside Road to walk on the pavement. There are not a lot of people walking on the road and generally they only walk on it during the day because the road is not lit. The windy would make accessing the property very difficult and it gets amplified in the summer with the summer traffic we see on this road. Bike are another thing that is often met on the road which can be startling when you come around some of the blind corners. The Ministry of Transportation and Transit should be contacted before the rezoning to commercial is considered.

Second issue is fire hazard and fire coverage. Where I live (North on the purposed land(Next-door)) we have no fire coverage. We do technically with Invermere having the pumper trucks and the water trucks but our insurance company still makes us pay for no coverage. If they are allowed to turn the property into commercial, they will have full run to do whatever they want. Last time they tried for this campground they said no fire but people come here to go camping to have fires. At the meeting they said there would be no fire campfires yet on their presentation board it said there would be communal fires and private campfires. Over the last few years, we have had a lot of fires both caused by people and nature. We had the Enid fire twice since we owned our property, one on Toby Bences, Which we saw the flames from our front door and Bruce Mountain. Allowing them to change the zoning to commercial would open up a huge amount of land use which could go into a high-risk fire land use. We had a fire at our house last year in the winter and it took Invermere about an hour to respond because they are a volunteer fire department but they still showed up and I appreciate what they did for us but it took time. If this were to happen in a campground, they would not be able to get into the site to fight the fire because everyone will be trying to leave. With my property being over top of the area I am worried that it will threaten my property and outbuildings. When asked about that their preventative actions for fire they had no response for me. Infact the developer that is working on the project said they do not need to have fire protection. I asked for reservoir location and size which they did not have. I asked for where exactly their distribution lines and hydrants would be located and they said they do not need to show these yet it says on RDEK site that these proposals are supposed to have this outlined when they are presented do they not?

Again, with fire protection but on a different hand what if we have to evacuate. With the small narrow windy road and an entire town racing to leave, like it has in the past when Enid fire happened the 2<sup>nd</sup> time these people trying to leave the campground would also be racing to get out but would have to wait. There is only one way into the area which means fire trucks won't enter it in case they get trapped. This should have been

asked of the areas fire department before this should even be considered as well as what they have for fire protection.

Third is not something that is taken into concerns from local governments but it is something that I myself support and that is wild life. The one present has stated they are wiping out a coyote family located on their property. My property being SH1 I do have a small hobby farm. They are a threat to my animals and have killed my pets in the past. We went an alternative route and put up motion lights with sound to scare them off which has worked. I do not like coyotes but they are necessary for the natural ecosystem. They have no livestock so they are literally slaughter these animals without cause. The Elk move through my far field and down to the wetlands through this property every Fall to Spring. I will not develop the Southern part of my property because of the animals that use it as a corridor. We have black bears, Grizzly Bears, Elk, Deer (white-tail and mule) badgers and who knows what else goes through here. I chose to leave that open for them because they are getting pushed more and more into the road which will lead to more accidents.

By allowing a campground/Glamp ground (still recreational accommodations) it will bring in more food and garbage which is an attractant. Invermere is showing how these visitors and new residents do not understand that garbage brings these animals into town which sometimes leads to them conflict. I do not want to see this happen to the bears and other predators that take resident in the area. They do not harm anything, they eat road kill, remove ant mounds and underground wasp nest and move on. They probably go down the hill to the wetlands and eat roots and other things down there after they are done in our yard.

Fourth is trespassers. We have had to set up cameras because of the amount of people we have just walking onto our property lately. We have a barbed wire fence and a gate so it isn't the most inviting property. The owners already thought they would use part of my property to allow access for the campground. My grandfather and the original owners made an agreement and my grandfather put our fence more onto our property to allow himself and his friends safer access onto the purposed property. I have seen member of the family move said pins and are now saying that is where they go but the actual plot plan does not match the drawings of the property, they are trying to develop. I know they will have to resurvey the property if they want to do anything but they are having a walking trail on my fence line. People will crossover and take pictures of my animals, outbuildings and at times my children when they are outside playing. I have had a few things that I inherited from my grandfather go missing which is what sparked the need cameras.

With the size of the road noted before in my letter there is also the worry of evacuation. If there was ever a reason to evacuate due to a fire for example the added vehicles from this site enter the road during this time would cause an accident because of the limited view from and on the road. Even just pulling on to the road that property does not have a clear line of site. I myself have difficulty sometimes see from my driveway and I am worried that if people are not used to the area there would most defiantly be accident on the road.

Next is wastewater. One thing I am worried about is the wastewater coming from these sites. They do not talk about it and on the RDEK site they do not allow septic tanks for campgrounds. Even with this glamping people need to use the washroom. A holding tank doesn't make sense for something of this size so I am wondering why they would be allowed to do this. It states in the bylaws they must connect to city sewer which is not available in our area. Being uphill from the wetlands also add to the trickiness of dealing with this problem. This is something that should investigate and proven before they are allowed to talk about rezoning.

Water is another thing. They did not state what the yield of their well is or if it was on an aquafer of their own. If they are allowed to change the zoning of their property, should they not have a minimum capacity/yield which they would need to supply/maintain. Everyone beyond my property has wells and they

need to test them regularly. Would there not be a requirement to rezone that they need to maintain a certain quality of water standards that is set by Interior health. They provided no information on their infrastructure for the planned area. should they not have a plan complete before you would consider rezoning?

People camping or glamping (still recreational accommodations) in this area will want to walk to Wilmer or to other areas. It was stated that there is no access to the wetlands but they will find a way. Westside road cannot handle a large amount of people walking on it due to its size and the fact there are no sidewalks. One thing that makes this area great is that the people that enjoy and go see these areas are respectful to these sites. The visitors will most likely damage the Indigenous baths that are located near the wetlands on the property as well.

In regards to the road being narrow there are also some sharp corners. Just last year we had three young men lose their life on that corner and there has been a lot people go over it over the years as well. the location that they are wanting to put there entre road does not allow enough safe visibility. Even where my driveway is sometimes it is hard to see what is coming around the corner. My worry is what happened last year would happen again because people are not attentive sometimes when pulling out onto the road.

Also, I see that they are requesting to have a section subdivided into a 10acre parcel and be zoned as SH-1. SH-1 only allows one primary and one secondary home on it. Even though it will be 10acres they should only be allowed to have to at the most in that zone... Why are they allowed to have more? If they want to do that they should be zoned as residential and form a STRATA for them. If something does go on and one of the houses sell to someone else there would be a big legal battle. I do not know the minimum sized lots they are allowed to subdivide into based on the current land size but there should be consistency that everyone has to follow, hence the zoning.

My land is SH1 and I believe Waynes is ALR. There are a lot more areas that would be better suited for something like this. Our little Rural community would be greatly impacted for the worse if this property were to become commercial. It was ALR before according to BC assessment and I do not understand why it would go into commercial. The surrounding residents are farmers or people that use their land for food or other purposes (ie. Hay). Allowing the property into commercial what push the old residents that are in the area out. The increased amount of traffic would be the equivalent of another community the size of Wilmer using that road as an access.

Please take note of these concerns and worries.

Thank you for your time,  
Justin Nielsen



**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Bruce Johnson <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Saturday, April 26, 2025 6:27 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Bylaw amendments 3270-3271 Toby Benches

I oppose these amendments on multiple grounds.

What infuriates me most though is that It would appear that the new owners of this land bought it with the view to developing it .

We should not have to spend time and effort to defend our landscape against those who aim to exploit it and rezone it to their own advantage.

Zoning changes should ideally be made pre empatively when there is a a perceived need.

Bruce Johnson  
3943 Toby Creek road

Bruce s I pad

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Chris & Nancy Jones [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, April 25, 2025 9:03 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Wet lands

Hello Krista,  
I am opposed to the development of glampers in our pristine wetlands.  
Chris

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Joan Kraayvanger [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, April 28, 2025 1:30 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Cc:** Marilyn Kraayvanger; Tony Kraayvanger  
**Subject:** Bylaw Amendments No. 3270-3271 - Toby Benches

To:  
Krista Gilbert  
RDEK Planning Technician

Dear Krista,

I am in opposition to the commercial development that will impact the integrity of the Columbia Valley Wetland Wildlife Management Area. The lower end of the property back on the edge of the easily accessible Wetlands. How will the proponent's plans guarantee patrons of the industrial tourist site will be barred from hiking and paddling in the vulnerable wetlands? My opposition stems from my knowledge of human behaviour. Some human beings when they are on holidays seem to think that "I'm on holiday and can do anything no matter what at NO TRESPASSING sign means". They will simply ignore the signs and get out their kayaks and paddle boards to explore the Wetlands resulting in disturbance to the nesting waterfowl.

Ian Jack, Ellen Zimmerman, Wildsight (formerly known as the East Kootenay Environmental Society) and hundreds of people worked LONG AND HARD to protect this AMAZING Wetland.

Please deny this application!

Yours Truly,  
Marilyn Kraayvanger  
1756 7th Avenue  
Invermere, BC

(This email was sent by Joan Kraayvanger, daughter of Marilyn and Tony Kraayvanger due to email technical difficulties. I've included their email addresses in the cc. section. Thank you.)

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Ursel and Hermann Mauthner [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, April 28, 2025 4:04 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Cc:** Roberta Schnider; Susan Clovechok  
**Subject:** Toby Benches Amendments

Direktors of RDEK

I'm opposed to change the OPC designation of the described lots by the following reasons,

1. It was already rejected by APC
2. the lots are a strongly used corridor to the wetlands and a winter grazing land by wildlife, a major factor to a healthy population of all sorts of wildlife, especially for the future.
3. the somewhat peacefully life we enjoy in this valley (Wilmer) would be negatively impacted by increased traffic and influx of people.
4. This land should have a complete environmental study done, by governmental direction and might suggest to annex to the existing wetland destination. A thorough study should be over several years and all seasons as weather and wildlife behaviour varies strongly.
5. I oppose the change to commercial or subdivision as there is no guarantee of its success. Once its changed, the land as we now know , a healthy status, is gone. We live here and our life is impacted.

You are elected to represent all the opinions and the will of the people of your district.

Respectfully

Hermann Mauthner  
4385 Bullin Street Wilmer  
Invermere B.C. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** S McGill <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 28, 2025 6:43 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Bylaw Amendments No.3270-3271 Toby Benches

As a resident of Wilmer I would like to oppose this proposed development on Westside Road. This is a sensitive wildlife area and is next to a nature reserve. A development such as this would be detrimental to wildlife movement. Elk and deer, in particular, use those lands. In fact, the only place I have seen elk in the Wilmer area is exactly in that location. In closing, this development would have a negative effect on the community and on the sensitive natural environment.

Sincerely yours,  
Sue McGill

## Krista Gilbert

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**From:** Sandy McKay - [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 24, 2025 7:45 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Toby Benches/Statham-Widmer request for Land Development .

Hello. I, Sandy McKay, and my husband, Wayne Statham, own 40 acres of land bordering the south side of the proposed campground on Westside Road. Our property is zoned Rural Residential.

We vehemently oppose this development!

What began as a small-scale campground has morphed into a large development with 5 lots proposed for the top of the hill and many sites for permanent structures. The planned parking lot is only a few meters from our house.

The main road and Wilmer Hill leading to the property have an 8% grade, two blind corners, no shoulder, and no pull-off areas. This is not a safe situation for large numbers of people turning off the road.

This property is a main corridor for wildlife coming off the Benches to the Wetlands. Daily, we see elk and deer using this area and crossing the main road. The area is congested with only local traffic.

The original plan was for a tenting campground. Now we see plans for yurts, small cabins, and sites to park holiday trailers.

So, no longer a campground, but rather a trailer park!!

Our home, lifestyle, and land value would be greatly affected by this development.

Please consider shutting it down!

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Patti and Dave Meadows [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Saturday, April 26, 2025 12:48 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Re: Opposition to "Bylaw Amendments No. 3270-3271 - Toby Benches"

Re: "Bylaw Amendments No. 3270-3271 - Toby Benches"

I am writing to vehemently oppose the Wilmer Development Proposal

As I'm certain you are aware of the bylaws and the contents of the proposal I won't attempt to point list all of my concerns.

Suffice to say that a five lot residential subdivision **development of a specialty nature resort consisting of 90 luxury glamping sites on 40 acres** of winter ungulate range and a wildlife corridor. on this much property cannot be thought of as eco-tourism, sustainable or something that any of our local population wants to see. This is an ecologically sensitive area and the idea that the construction of 90 glamping sites with interconnected pathways won't harm it is ludicrous. This is in no way a nature resort it is simply a way to allow another business man a way to take advantage of this pristine and valuable eco system. We are asked to believe that the additional traffic will not be an issue. REALLY????

Where will all of the water required for this development come from. The Wetlands are already in trouble on this front.

This development will not add to our community but will certainly line the pockets of the developer.

I say **NO!!!!** To this development and to changing the zoning bylaws to allow it.

Patricia Meadows  
Edgewater, BC

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Brien Morgan [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, April 25, 2025 8:15 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Bylaw Amendment's 3270-3271 Toby Benches

As a community member, living at 9191 Wallis Avenue in Wilmer for the last seven year's, I stand opposed to this proposal.

**Brien Morgan**  
*PAA Instructor - Clearwater River Déné School*





Based on a quote from a RDEK planner, “Decisions have to be made based on what is good for the land not what someone wants. People come and go but the land is permanent.”

Bylaw Amendments No. 3270-3271 - Toby Benches

Seven key reasons to reject or radically scale back the “Wilmer Glamping” rezoning

1. Wildlife corridor severed – The 40-acre parcel is a key elk, mule-deer and black-bear route into the Columbia Wetlands; 90 lit, serviced pads would fragment that link permanently.
2. Aquifer & wetland at risk – Ninety pads could draw ~90 m<sup>3</sup>/day from the same aquifer as Wilmer’s community well, then return septic effluent upslope from a RAMSAR-class wetland already sensitive to small phosphorus increases.
3. Traffic danger – An extra 100-plus guest and staff vehicles on narrow, winding Westside Road would roughly double weekend volumes and raise collision and emergency-response times.
4. Human-caused wildfire hazard – Forty-two percent of B.C. fires start with people; clustering tourists, campfires and hot exhausts in dry ungulate range strains Wilmer’s limited firefighting supply.
5. Precedent problem – If the venture fails, NR-1 resort zoning stays, inviting even larger commercial uses and adding another “paper-cut” to the valley’s land base.
6. Scale mismatch – Radius Retreat operates 8 yurts on 1 000 acres; this plan crams 90 luxury units onto 40 acres—the opposite of “nature-friendly.”
7. Low-impact alternatives exist – Boardwalks, school programs and the Wilmer wetlands lookout already provide nature access without bulldozers; if anything proceeds, cap it at ≤10 true low-impact pads with a covenant barring wetland access.

The best use of the land, with reference to the words of one of the RDEK’s own staff, would be for someone to buy it and maintain its ability to support all forms of life, not just glampers.

I’m not sure of the process involved a couple years ago in the government’s purchase of the land to the north and west of Wilmer that was slated for a subdivision scheme that would have covered the costs of building two trophy homes atop the hill, but it would be appropriate if the government were to offer a similar buyout in this case.

Pat Morrow, 9154 Fairview Rd, Wilmer [REDACTED]

April 28/25

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Donna Murray [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, April 28, 2025 4:20 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Bylaw amendments 3270-3271-Toby benches

Good morning Krista,

I am writing to voice our concerns regarding this said property. I'm sure you are aware of the road from the bridge to Wilmer, that it is very winding, with a steep hill into the town, and there are no shoulders .. I know that the letter states we wouldn't feel the impact of a hundred extra cars, but I beg to differ.. we're already feeling a big impact just from the surge in tourists over the last few years.. with lake Windermere being clogged to overflowing, tourists are looking for alternatives and one of them is lake Enid! It is non stop traffic back and forth with kayakers, canoers, boaters and pedal bikers.. etc.. from the early morning hours to late in the evening.. and with having to stop and go on the Wilmer hill from all kinds of traffic turning in and out of this property is concerning.. and it also means more traffic through our town to other lakes.. it poses an extra strain on the residents of Wilmer especially those with young children who are at play. For our waterfowl on the lakes, and also the wildlife who inhabit our forested areas and the wetlands! So I would ask that you please take these concerns into consideration before proceeding with the plans regarding this property.

Thank you

Donna

Sent from my iPhone

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Justin Charity Gabryle and Brooklynne Nielsen [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Sunday, April 27, 2025 10:36 AM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Toby Benches Statham/ Widmer  
**Attachments:** pro-DSPfxTpl.jpeg; pro-mGsUQawl.jpeg; pro-JzwRWo0A.jpeg; pro-Owvbf6aS.jpeg; pro-3TWMM2xJ.jpeg; pro-4iM5QJla.jpeg; pro-yeeW2JAu.jpeg; pro-wHGE1k9.jpeg; pro-BFic3N0z.jpeg; pro-n7OQjEP2.jpeg

To RDEK

My name is Charity Nielsen we own the property that is next to the proposed property for the camp ground in Wilmer BC.

I have concerns about the proposed property.

The first concern is the traffic on Wilmer hill. That road is not big enough for this type of traffic that will be coming thru. The driveway does not have 200 meters both ways of clear visibility due to it being right after a corner on a hill going towards Wilmer. When you are coming up the road you cannot see if someone is pulling out of the road way they have. The road way has to be at least 10 meters away from the utility post that is by the dirt road. They have a walking trail so people can walk up to Wilmer. Our road has no walking space or sidewalks. It will be dangerous for so many people to walk on this road.

My second concern is the fire protection. Looking at the maps there is no road way for firetrucks to be able to get in and out. There closest fire hydrant is in Wilmer so they will need to use the pump truck to put out any fires. They posted on Facebook there will not be any fire pits on site, but at the meeting they had it showed there will be firepits all over the property. If there is a forest fire Wilmer has one main road out of town.

My third concern is the wildlife that use the property to migrate. We have elk, deer, badgers, coyotes, owls, Black bears, grizzly bears to name a few that cross thru our property into that property to get down to the wetlands. What will happen to them when there's hundreds of people down there all the time. I am including pictures of the elk that use this proposed property to migrate from the wetlands to the hills across the road. I have pictures of bears that come up from the wetlands that use that property to come to our property. There are two coyote dens on the property that we were able to get pictures of that were there last fall and they no longer seem to be down there. The wetlands are another concern. How will they be able to keep the guests from not going down there. CWS manages the four units of Columbia NWA. These areas provide important wetland habitat for migrating waterfowl. The NWA is also important for other wetland-dependent wildlife, fish, and plant species. This is especially the case for species considered rare, threatened, or endangered.

Under the Canada Wildlife Act, NWAs are protected and managed in accordance with the Wildlife Area Regulations.

My fourth concern is changing the zoning into commercial property. As soon as it changes, there will be no way of stopping them from building whatever they want.

My fifth concern is the area they want to make into SH1. The email they sent us shows 5 dwellings on the SH1 zone. The primary use within SH1 zones is single-family residential housing. Other permitted uses might include accessory buildings, farm animals, and potentially some limited non-residential uses, depending on the specific RDEK bylaw

Thank you for taking your time to read this. I hope you will take this into consideration while making your decision.

Charity Nielsen  
9320 Westside Rd  
Invermere BC

Personal information has been withheld in  
accordance with section 22(1) of the *Freedom  
of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

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**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Joan Patterson [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, April 28, 2025 2:57 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Bylaw Amendments No. 3270-3271 - Toby Benches

Hello. I am a resident of Wilmer and I am in strong opposition to these zoning bylaw amendments and a commercial development application for a residential subdivision and resort with 90 glamping sites on 40 acres of land that backs on to the Columbia Wetlands Wildlife Management Area just below Wilmer.

The integrity of the wetlands must be preserved as they are a crucial habitat and refuge for birds, turtles, elk, otters and other wildlife. Any commercial development in this area seriously threatens the wetlands - it is impossible for such development to be truly 'nature friendly' with the resultant increased foot and watercraft traffic in these very vulnerable areas.

Please consider the inherent value of this area and our collective responsibility to maintain its integrity. Once lost, it cannot be restored.

It would be wrong to approve the zoning bylaw changes and the commercial development proposal. Please don't.

Sincerely,

Joan Patterson

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** EP <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Friday, April 25, 2025 8:56 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** GLAMping in the Columbia Wetlands

My family and I are opposed to re-zoning for GLAMping in the Columbia Wetlands.

E. & L. Peter, Invermere, BC

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Sunday, April 27, 2025 8:18 AM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Bylaw Amendments 3270-3271 Toby Benches

Good MORning,

I'd like to ask for the information package on the proposed bylaw amendments for 3270-3271 Toby Benches.

I have deep concerns about the slippery slope of rezoning this critical wildlife area so close to the wetlands- not to mention the increase in tourism traffic into Wilmer and it's connected backcountry corridors (already being misused and under-enforced by under-staffed law and conservation-enforcement officials). WATER- the source we drink from, and rely on for fire-fighting...is an already-over-maxed resource on an undersized & aging system and how on earth is the Wilmer Water board going to supply an extra 100 vehicles worth of occupants/day adequate water? The pump was down on several occasions last summer leaving existing residents on strict water restrictions. Or are these tourists going to purchase water bottles ...and where will those end up?

Large sections of similar area have been brought under Nature Conservancy wings (look to the west and north—hello) and even those are littered with garbage, illegal ATV and dirt bike tracks, and even still there is illegal DUMPING just outside of wilmer north on westside road.

If these current area can't be managed in the best interest of wildlife & residents interest...why on earth would we invite more issues into the mix?

...light & love

...k

[REDACTED]

~~ I believe that we aren't here to work or be accessible to the world all the time. I am sending this note at a time that works for me! Please reply when it works for you. I do office hours: Tues-Fri 9-5. I don't do inquiries via social media & your response will come in 24-48 business hours.

~~ Proud to document & celebrate love ❤️ for 🇺🇳 all beautiful humans. I am a non-Indigenous person living & recreating in the shared, traditional & unceded territory of the Ktunaxa & Secwepemc people, & the chosen home of people of the Metis Nation.

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Karen Reisle [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, April 28, 2025 12:03 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Bylaw Amendments No. 3270-3271 - Toby Benches

Hello Krista,

I am very concerned about the proposal to put 90 glamping sites and 5 houses on the property half way up the Wilmer hill that is partly within the Columbia wetlands. I am very concerned about the impact on the protected wetlands and feel that this development will cause harm to the animals and birds that already have ever shrinking places to live. I know the developers say they will have a fence that is supposed to stop guests from accessing the wetlands, but human nature being what it is, I can't imagine that actually stopping anyone when they are already so close.

As a resident of Wilmer who is very familiar with the road to this location, I foresee a nightmare as far as traffic is concerned. This road is only 2 lanes wide with drop offs on either side much of the way and almost no shoulder. It is already a very scary road to walk or cycle on. An increase of traffic, particularly drivers, cyclists and pedestrians who are not familiar with the road, will very likely lead to increased accidents and possibly even fatalities. To improve the road to accommodate the increase in traffic would be an enormous, expensive undertaking. Should this proposal be approved (and I truly hope it will not be) the developer should be required to pay for any and all necessary upgrades to make the road safe for all traffic. This cost should not be borne by taxpayers.

I am not against 5 houses being built on the property, especially if they are much needed homes for local residents to live in. I am also not against having more camping areas in the valley. However, I am against this proposal of a large camping site for the reasons which I have stated above. This property has already been rezoned from agricultural land in 2006 and I believe that the request for a further change in zoning should be denied.

Thank you for receiving my concerns.

Karen Reisle  
Wilmer BC



**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Sherry Dewey [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, April 28, 2025 4:51 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Bylaw Amendments No. 3270-3271 - Toby Benches"

Good afternoon Karen

I would like to voice my opposition to the recent application to the zoning by law to accommodate the f lot subdivision for development. I believe this property is far too close to the protected Wilmer Wetland area. Any development of this kind should go through strict scrutiny as it could encourage more development of this kind in our small village of Wilmer so close to the Columbia valley wetlands our prized Ramsar protected migratory bird sanctuary.

Thank you for reading and registering my opposition.

Sherry Dewey  
Invermere BC

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Sharon Morgan [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 29, 2025 11:23 AM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Bylaw Amendments No. 3270-3271 - Toby Benches

Hi Krista,

So sorry I missed the deadline yesterday to voice my opinion on this proposal at Wilmer.  
I do object. Wilmer is such a quiet, rural, lovely community.  
The wetlands are of world class value.  
Please do not let this development happen.

Sharon Morgan  
5090 Hewitt Road  
Edgewater BC  
[REDACTED]

28 April 2025

Mr. Rob Gay  
Board Chair, Regional District of East Kootenay  
19, 24 th Avenue South  
Cranbrook BC  
V1C 3H8

Copies to  
Susan Clovechok, Vice Chair  
Roberta Schnider, Director – G

**RE: proposed Bylaw Amendments No. 3270-3271 - Toby Benches - Statham-Widmer  
(Haworth) Rezoning**

Dear Mr. Gay and RDEK Board,

I am writing to you regarding the the “Wilmer Glamping” proposal: proposed Application for OCP designation change from RR (Rural Resource) to SH (Small Holdings) and CR (Commercial Recreation) and a zoning change from A-2 (Rural Residential (Country) Zone) to SH-1 (Small Holdings Residential Zone and NR-1 (Natural Resort Zone).

The proposed development is located on Westside Road, just south-east of Wilmer where I own a residence on a residential lot. My wife and I purchased this property three years ago because it is located in Wilmer, a quiet and peaceful community away from the crowds of tourists. Should this development proceed, it would severely de-value our property – and the community - for us.

I do not support the proposed development for the following reasons:

- It does not fit with the current character of Wilmer
- we don't have the water needed to supply domestic water – or to fight a fire
- Increased traffic on Westside Rd
- Environmental impact of the proposed development

Wilmer is a quiet town that has been in existence since 1886. It is full of hard-working individuals, many that work in blue collar type jobs to support their families, similar to when the town was founded and supported families of miners. A glamping proposal with 90 units is completely at odds with to the history and character of this community. Most community members are down to earth and would not be caught dead “glamping” - nor could they afford such a lavish expenditure.

This development would radically change the nature existing community. This is the second time this proposal has been brought forward to the RDEK, and it was very strongly opposed by Wilmer residents the first time.

Water is a massive concern in our area: Wilmer Waterworks has made it clear that little future development is possible, and our fire-fighting reserves would only last a few minutes. We lack the capacity to support the scale of development proposed, both for domestic use and fire

protection. The Glamping Site is located on a dry and grassy area, and outdoor fires, candles, and camp stoves increase the risk of fires; and a regional wildfire would further strain our already limited water reserves.

This development would drastically increase traffic along the Westside road, a narrow, steep, winding road. I am concerned about the inevitable impatience of drivers and unsafe maneuvers that are likely to occur on this steep and winding road, all of which will likely lead to some serious motor vehicle accidents; and of course, this would be accompanied by traffic congestion.

The lower end of the property is within just a few metres of the edge of the easily accessible wetlands. It is inevitable that patrons of the tourism site will hike down to the water's edge, seeking to hike along the Wilmer Pontoon road and other trails, and paddle in that especially vulnerable part of the wetlands during the summer months – a critical period for nesting and rearing of chicks.

Thank you for your consideration of my letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gareth'.

Gareth Thomson  
9140 Elmer Avenue  
Wilmer, BC  
[REDACTED]

**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Emma Wales [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 30, 2025 2:36 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Opposition to Bylaw Amendments 3270-3271 – Toby Benches

Dear Ms. Gilbert,

I'm writing as a local resident who cares deeply about the ecological integrity of the Columbia Valley and the future of the Columbia Wetlands Wildlife Management Area. I strongly oppose Bylaw Amendments 3270 and 3271 related to the proposed development near Toby Benches.

This isn't just about one glamping proposal. It's about setting a precedent—re-zoning 40 acres of critical wildlife corridor to allow 90 luxury glamping units and 5 residential lots is a slippery slope. If this zoning change is approved and the business model fails, we risk opening the door to more intensive and inappropriate development in one of the most ecologically sensitive areas of our region.

The Columbia Wetlands are a Ramsar-designated wetland of international importance, and we have a responsibility to protect them. The proposed development would bring over 100 additional vehicles per day onto the Westside Road, impacting both wildlife movement and community safety. I'm not reassured by claims that this won't affect traffic or increase hazards in and out of Wilmer—those of us who live here know otherwise.

This proposal flies in the face of what nature-friendly tourism should look like. When places like Radius Retreat operate just eight yurts on 1,000 acres, the scale of this project feels exploitative, not respectful.

Please do not approve Bylaw Amendments 3270 and 3271. Our valley's character—and the wildlife and wild places that make it so special—depend on thoughtful, cautious stewardship, not aggressive overdevelopment.

Sincerely,

Emma Wales

2700 Westside Road



Box 601 Invermere BC V0A 1K0 • ph 250.409.5708 • e [invermere@wildsight.ca](mailto:invermere@wildsight.ca)

April 28th, 2025

Re: Bylaw Amendments No. 3270-3271 Toby Benches

While we appreciate the opportunity to provide input, Wildsight Invermere has serious concerns regarding both the content of the proposed amendments and the process by which they have been advanced. The scale and intensity of the proposed development are incompatible with the sensitive environmental values of the Toby Benches area, including critical wildlife corridors, wetlands, and species at risk habitats. Furthermore, the limited timeframe for public consultation, the inadequate consideration of agency and expert feedback, and the risk of cumulative ecological impacts highlight the need for a more cautious, transparent, and inclusive planning approach. We urge the RDEK to reconsider proceeding with these amendments until these significant concerns are properly addressed.

## 1. Consultation Process:

- Despite this proposal being in development for nearly a year, the public was afforded only a four-day window to review extensive documentation and provide feedback. This limited timeframe is unacceptable if a collaborative and inclusive process is truly desired.
- While referrals were made to APC Areas F and G, the Provincial Government (WLRS), the Shuswap Band, Ktunaxa Nation Council (KNC), Interior Health Authority (IHA), and others, the results of these consultations were not included in the public information package. The public is therefore unaware of the concerns or objections these agencies may have raised—agencies that had months, not days, to assess the material.
- RDEK Board documents indicated that there would be an opportunity for public discussion prior to the public hearing. If the open house held in Wilmer in December was intended to fulfill this requirement, we must point out that attendees were offered information only, with no opportunity for substantive input.
- Agencies and organizations with specialized knowledge of ecosystem constraints—such as Wildsight, Columbia Wetlands Stewardship Partners, and local Rod & Gun Clubs—were not meaningfully consulted. Being afforded only a four-day response window signals a troubling lack of respect for the critical volunteer work these organizations perform.
- Despite the Advisory Planning Commission (APC) recommending refusal of this project, the RDEK Board has proceeded.

## **2. Buffers:**

The OCP requires the establishment of buffers around sensitive environmental features such as riparian areas, wetlands, Class 1 ungulate winter ranges, wildlife corridors, and habitat areas. The proponent has proposed only a 20-metre buffer between glamping sites and wetlands, while buffers for other key features have not been established. A short, high-level desktop review (ESA Assessment) commissioned by the proponent is insufficient, particularly given the proximity to the Columbia Wetlands—recognized as a wetland of international importance. A more robust environmental review and appropriate buffer establishment are needed.

## **3. Wetland and Riparian Area Protection:**

We echo the Ministry of WLRs's concerns regarding the proximity of development to the Columbia Wetlands Wildlife Management Area (CWWMA) and the potential disturbances caused by visitors and pets. A simple rail fence and signage will not adequately protect sensitive wetland ecosystems.

## **4. Wildlife Corridors:**

The OCP emphasizes the importance of preserving wildlife corridors and contiguous habitats by avoiding extensive development. The proposed 5 residential lots and 90 glamping sites constitute extensive development that would fragment or eliminate critical wildlife corridors.

## **5. Ungulate Winter Range:**

The application assumes that seasonal use will allow continued ungulate winter range use. However, given eyewitness accounts, game camera footage, and the proposal allowing four-season occupancy by staff in glamping cottages and RVs, we believe this critical habitat will be significantly impacted.

## **6. Species at Risk (SAR) – Badger Habitat:**

In the face of accelerating species loss, we must exercise extreme caution with SAR habitat. The conclusion that the development will not impact badger movement is highly questionable given the scale of proposed human presence. A more thorough, independent ecological assessment is warranted.

## **7. Development Permit Areas (DPAs):**

We support the use of DPAs to regulate construction in sensitive environmental areas. Given that a large portion of the property falls within designated DPAs for riparian and wetland ecosystems and connectivity corridors, we request assurance that **all** structures—including glamping structures—will require a Development Permit prior to construction.

## **8. Human-Wildlife Interactions:**

We support IHA's recommendation that kitchens and bathrooms not be located in structures vulnerable to wildlife intrusion. We further recommend mandatory installation of wildlife-proof garbage and recycling containers on-site.

## **9. Density and Land Use Compatibility:**

The proposed zoning changes could increase human occupancy from 0–16 residents to 200–400 residents, drastically impacting wildlife and the rural character of surrounding lands.

#### **10. Water and Sewer:**

The OCP requires community water and sewer systems for multi-parcel subdivisions. The reliance on individual onsite services raises concerns, especially given the potential for septic contamination due to the site's slope toward the wetlands. We recommend that all five private lots be required to connect to community water and sewer infrastructure.

#### **11. Invasive Species Management:**

We strongly support a stringent invasive species (IS) management plan to address the increased IS vectors associated with this development.

#### **12. Fire Protection:**

The property lies within a moderate to high wildfire hazard area and outside any fire protection service boundary. A comprehensive fire prevention and response plan is essential.

#### **13. Covenant Protection and Land Return to the Crown:**

We seek clarification on whether a covenant protecting sensitive areas has been registered prior to bylaw adoption, and how and when the proposed land return to the Crown will be formalized and enforced.

#### **14. First Nations Consultation:**

We note the concerns raised by the Shuswap Band regarding the lack of meaningful consultation. The RDEK has a legal duty to consult Indigenous Nations, and we encourage continued dialogue and efforts to address their concerns.

#### **15. Cumulative Impacts:**

Assessing impacts parcel-by-parcel ignores cumulative environmental degradation. Development proposals must be evaluated within a broader landscape-level and long-term context.

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Thank you for considering our concerns.

Sincerely,

**Tracy Flynn**

Wildsight Invermere



**Krista Gilbert**

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**From:** Koral Wysocki <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 28, 2025 12:34 PM  
**To:** Krista Gilbert  
**Subject:** Bylaw Amendments 3270-3271 – Toby Benches

Hi Krista,

I am writing to express my strong objection to the proposed re-zoning application immediately adjacent to the Columbia Wetlands, and to request the information package.

Thoughtful land use is essential to the region's identity and environmental health - our most important resources in the valley. Incremental bylaw changes erode the character and the long term sustainability of the area.

I urge the Regional District of East Kootenay to reject this application to protect the ecological integrity of the Columbia Wetlands and uphold the long-term vision of sustainable, community-compatible development.

Thank you for considering my concerns.

--

Koral Wysocki