



Waldo Cove Regional Park Management Plan

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Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
1 INTRODUCTION	2
1.1 Park Overview	2
1.2 Establishment of Regional Parks.....	4
1.2.1 Background	4
1.2.2 Waldo Cove Park Planning Process.....	4
1.3 Existing Infrastructure and Current Uses.....	5
1.3.1 Existing Infrastructure.....	5
1.3.2 Current Uses.....	5
2 CULTURAL HERITAGE.....	7
3 RELATIONSHIP TO GUIDING DOCUMENTS	8
3.1 Regional Sustainability Strategy.....	8
3.2 Regional Parks Plan	8
3.3 Baynes Lake Official Community Plan.....	8
3.4 South Country Zoning and Floodplain Management Bylaw	8
3.5 Parks and Trails regulation and Fee Bylaw	9
3.6 Lake Koocanusa Recreation Strategy.....	9
4 Ecosystem and Habitat.....	10
4.1 Invasive Plants.....	10
4.2 Wildlife	10
4.3 Upland Vegetation	10
4.4 Natural Hazards.....	10
4.4.1 Alluvial Fans and Flooding.....	10
4.4.2 Wildfire.....	10
5 Park Vision	12
5.1 Goal	12
5.2 Key Management Issues	12
5.3 Public Safety.....	13
5.4 Commercial Tenure.....	13
5.5 Partnership and Collaboration.....	13
6 PRIORITY ACTIONS AND COST ESTIMATES	15

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The goal of the Waldo Cove Regional Park Management Plan is to establish objectives and strategies that will guide the long-term management of the park for the next 15 to 20 years. It is intended to provide strategic direction and guidance for the Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK), operators, maintenance contractors and stewardship groups in order to achieve a common vision for this important park.

Since 2002, the Province has issued tenure to the Friends of Lake Koocanusa Society (FOLKS) (2002 to 2019) or the RDEK (2019 onward) for the purpose of providing a public recreational access to Lake Koocanusa at Waldo Cove. For many years, Waldo Cove was a hidden gem, used primarily by the residents of Baynes Lake and other South Country locals. Over the years, Lake Koocanusa and Waldo Cove have become increasingly popular recreational destinations for visitors. The increased recreational pressure has created management issues that can impact the ecosystem, cultural resources and influence the visitor experience.

Key management issues are identified in section 5.2 of this Park Management Plan. Priority actions identified in section 6 form a road map for potential improvements to the park that will address key management issues within the purview of local government operations. Some of the management issues, such as the proliferation of mooring buoys, are multijurisdictional in nature and require a strategy developed outside of this Park Management Plan.

One of the great strengths of Waldo Cove Regional Park is the eager volunteer base, primarily made up of members of the FOLKS. With a proven ability to fundraise, secure grants and maintain the park area, a continued partnership with this dedicated group of volunteers will help provide the best possible public service with a lower financial burden to the RDEK.

There is a commercial tenure located on a portion of Crown land in Waldo Cove. This tenure for commercial purposes was established in 2002 to formalize an illegal occupation of Crown land created by several 'campsites' along the foreshore. The tenure is set to expire on June 1, 2022 and it is the RDEK's intention to work with the tenure holder, who is subsequently the owner of the property upland from Waldo Cove Regional Park, to relinquish the tenure and have the land become part of Waldo Cove Regional Park.

The primary function of the park is to provide seasonal public access to Waldo Cove and day use of park facilities.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Park Overview

Waldo Cove Regional Park became part of the RDEK's Electoral Area B Parks and Trails Service in 2019.

With the construction of the Libby Dam in the 1960s and 1970s, the Kootenay River upstream of the dam was transformed into the Koocanusa reservoir, also known as Lake Koocanusa (Fig 1). The name Koocanusa is a combination of Kootenay, Canada and USA. Because the waters of the Koocanusa reservoir would cover the town of Waldo, residents relocated to nearby Baynes Lake and elsewhere.

By the early 2000s, encroachment of RVs from an adjacent campground onto the Crown foreshore limited public access to Lake Koocanusa at Waldo Cove (Fig 2). The encroaching RVs became a galvanizing issue for several residents of Baynes Lake, who formed the FOLKS so they could advocate for the removal of the encroaching RVs and seek a tenure over the land that would restore Waldo Cove as a place where the public could access the foreshore and Lake Koocanusa. In 2002, provincial tenures were awarded to both the FOLKS, for the provision of a public boat launch, picnic area and swimming beach and to a commercial interest who was permitted to provide seven private campsites on the foreshore of Waldo Cove. In 2019, the FOLKS tenures were relinquished and the RDEK received tenure from the province to establish Waldo Cove Regional Park (Fig 3). At the time of drafting this plan, the commercial tenure is still in good standing, however, it is the RDEK's preference that the commercial tenure holder voluntarily relinquish the tenure when it is up for renewal in June 2022.

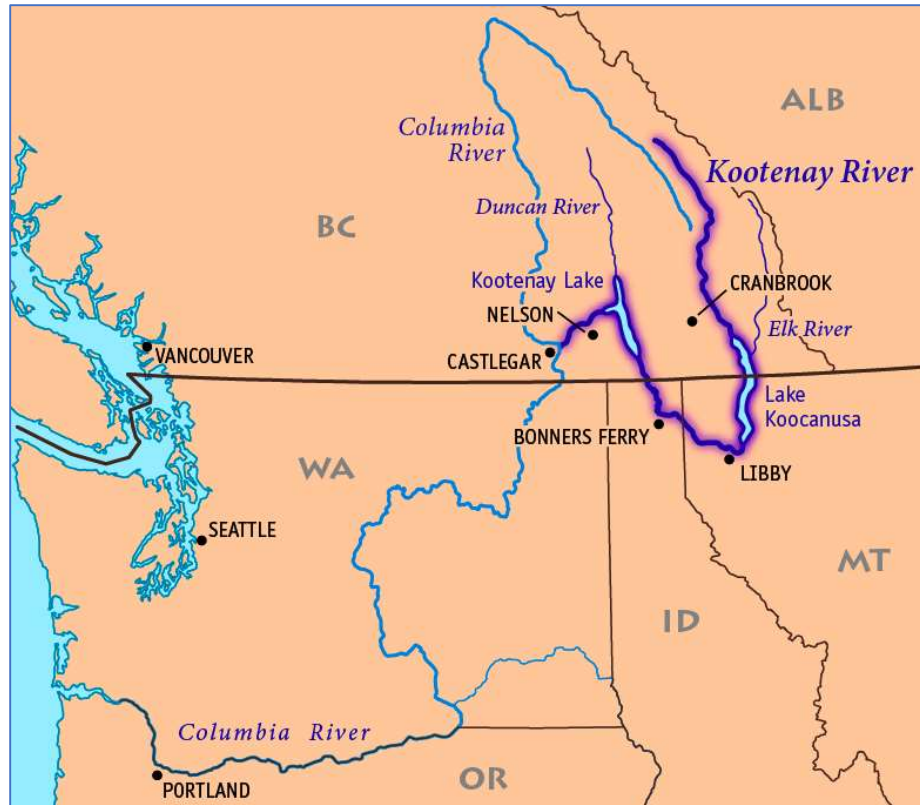


Figure 1: Kootenay River and Lake Kootenay

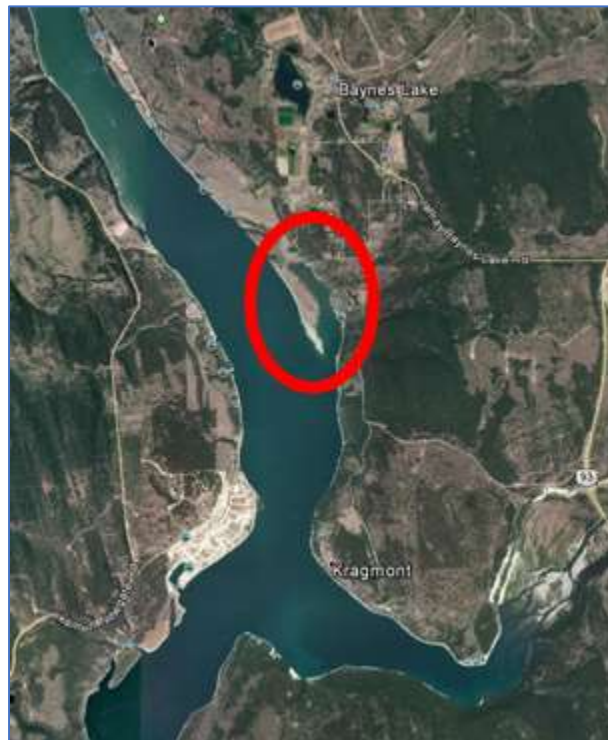


Figure 2: Location of Waldo Cove

1.2 Establishment of Regional Parks

1.2.1 Background

The provincial government granted the RDEK authority to establish a regional park function by Supplementary Letters Patent in 1966. The RDEK now operates regional parks and trails under the authority of the *Local Government Act*.

In the 1970s, the RDEK began development of its regional parks system after having acquired Crown lands at Wycliffe and Tie Lake for park facilities. In 1975, a major study of potential regional park sites was undertaken by the RDEK but no formal park plan was adopted. In 1980, the Elk Valley Regional Park was included in the regional parks system.

In 1990, Extended Service (Regional Parks) Area Establishment Bylaw No. 933 was adopted. This bylaw converted the regional parks function to an Extended Service to enable the RDEK to recover annual operating and servicing costs of parks from taxes levied on properties within the Regional District.

In 2002, the RDEK added the Old Coach Greenway (Columbia Valley Regional Trail) to its services in order to address the absence of a regional park in the Columbia Valley subregion. In 2004, the RDEK adopted Electoral Area Regional Parks and Trails Service Area Establishment Bylaws and the Regional Park Plan to simplify the financing of parks and trails and to administer the expanding parks system.

Electoral Area B Regional Parks and Trails Service Establishment Bylaw No. 1730, 2004 established a service to provide regional parks and trails within Electoral Area B. The capital and operating costs of parks and trails are recovered by monies collected by property tax levied on property within the Electoral Area.

With the regulatory tools in place to administer an expanding park system, a Regional Parks Plan followed. The focus of the Regional Parks Plan is to provide policies to guide the expansion, administration and financing of the regional parks system.

In 2019, the Parks and Trails Regulation and Fee Bylaw No. 2833 was adopted and outlines regulations and fees related to the use and management of all parks within the RDEK.

1.2.2 Waldo Cove Regional Park Planning Process

The RDEK operates regional parks and trails under the authority of the Local Government Act.

As per the RDEK Regional Parks Plan, separate management plans may be prepared for regional parks on an as required basis. Management plans should address topics such as land acquisition, site planning, facility development, recreation, user groups, access management, public safety, maintenance, control of invasive plants, threat from wildfire and funding and partnership agreements.

Each management plan will be approved by the Environmental Services Manager and adopted by Board resolution.

Consultation for this plan included the FOLKS, residents of Baynes Lake and property owners adjacent to the Waldo Cove Regional Park.

1.3 Existing Infrastructure and Current Uses

1.3.1 Existing Infrastructure

Existing infrastructure and amenities at the park include:

- Gravel access road and parking area
- Signage: welcome sign, no parking and regulatory sign at boat launch
- Interpretive kiosk with signs
- Swimming area delineated by log booms (boom approximately 170 m)
- Concrete boat launch (approximately 50 m by 5.5 m)
- Gate across boat launch
- Picnic tables (8)
- Rock barriers

1.3.2 Current Uses

The park provides seasonal public access to Waldo Cove and day use of park facilities. As one of the few places to launch a trailered boat for free in the area, Waldo Cove is very busy in the summer months. Much of the traffic taking advantage of the free boat launch is trucks with trailered boats. Many visitors also come to the Waldo Cove area via water to enjoy the Sandy Beach at the south side of the park and the adjacent peninsula, sometimes referred to as 'one tree island'. Mooring buoys have become prevalent in Waldo Cove.

Seven trailers are located in a commercial tenure area in the middle of the park and those occupants enjoy the lake access and park area. In addition to the commercial tenure, the property upland of the park is a commercial campground and hosts a summer camp, which sees the children using the area extensively.



Figure 3: Waldo Cove Park Tenure area and Commercial Tenure for Private Campsites

2 CULTURAL HERITAGE

The Ktunaxa have inhabited the general area for over 10,000 years. The natural landscape provided food, medicine, shelter and clothing for the first inhabitants as they followed seasonal vegetation and animal cycles throughout their territories.

South Country started seeing development and settlement in the early 1900's as a result of the completion of the Great Northern Railway (G.N.R.) in 1902 which ran from the United States of America to the coal fields in the Crowsnest Pass. In 1905, W.W. Waldo settled in the area along with two horse ranchers – the area was what would come to be known as the Waldo townsite. That same year the Ross Saskatoon Company established a sawmill just south of Waldo where the Elk River Meets the Kootenay. The Baker Lumber Company also established itself in the area during these early years and the town of Waldo quickly flourished with the establishment of the Krag Hotel, a three room school house and a non-denominational church.

Waldo was located approximately 3 km north of the mouth of the Elk River. It was initially a stopping point for river boats travelling upstream from Montana to Galbraith's Ferry (Fort Steele) and Wildhorse Creek. At its peak Waldo was home to a lumber mill, grocery store, school house, general store/post office, garage and a cable suspension bridge providing access across the Kootenay River. In 1929 the entire town was almost destroyed by a fire which started near the lumber mill. Eventually the location was flooded by the creation of the reservoir for the Libby Dam. In the late 1960s construction of the Libby Dam in Montana started and was officially dedicated in 1975. The dam created Lake Koocanusa in 1973, an international lake created by the flooding of the Kootenay River valley. The damming of the Kootenay River flooded many of the valley bottom agricultural lands and farms resulting in significant property loss for those farmers and residents in the valley. Some of the displaced property owners moved into nearby Baynes Lake.



Figure 4: Waldo Cove Regional Park Picnic Area and Beach

3 RELATIONSHIP TO GUIDING DOCUMENTS

3.1 Regional Sustainability Strategy

The Regional Sustainability Strategy (RSS) provides the RDEK with a wide ranging, long term planning tool. It equips the region with a sustainability lens to guide and evaluate operations and decision-making. The RSS was adopted by the Board on October 3, 2014.

During the RSS public consultation process, it was evident that the environment is a primary concern for the region's residents. The protection of the natural environment is consistently ranked as one of the most important considerations when decisions are made about development and economic activities. The natural environment is also integral to both the quality of life of individuals for recreational purposes and the provision of economic opportunities for many businesses.

3.2 Regional Parks Plan

The purpose of the Regional Parks Plan is to determine the goals and objectives of the RDEK's regional park and trails system, to set criteria for additions to the regional parks and trail system, to establish policy for the RDEK's administration of park land or cash-in-lieu from a developer at time of subdivision, to initiate standards for the regulation, administration and operation of park and trail facilities and to identify existing park and trail services and their funding mechanism.

3.3 Baynes Lake Official Community Plan

The Baynes Lake Official Community Plan (OCP) was adopted in August of 2011. Waldo Cove Regional Park is located in the Baynes Lake subarea of the plan. The Crown land in the park that was formerly part of the FOLKS tenures is designated Open Space, Recreation and Trails with the remaining land designated Rural Resource. Both designations support the use of the land for greenspace and recreational opportunities. Throughout the engagement process for the OCP, continued access to recreational opportunities was a high priority. The OCP contains policies that support the establishment of additional public access points to Lake Koocanusa, establishing an Area B Regional park between Kragmont and Lake Koocanusa and potentially establishing a service area to support financing new park services. Although Waldo Cove Regional Park is not between Kragmont and the reservoir, it will still service residents of Kragmont, Baynes Lake and points beyond. Although the commercial tenure at Waldo Cove is not part of the park, the RDEK's preference is that it will be in the future. The land occupied by the commercial tenure is designated Commercial Recreation, which supports recreational vehicle parks, campgrounds and other similar recreation type land uses.

3.4 South Country Zoning and Floodplain Management Bylaw

The South Country Zoning and Floodplain Management bylaw was adopted in August of 2011. The South Country Zoning and Floodplain Management Bylaw is the regulatory tool used by the RDEK to establish development provisions for individual parcels of land. The zoning bylaw establishes permitted uses, development density and parcel size, and other development controls such as building setbacks, building height and parking.

Portions of the park formerly under tenure to the FOLKS are zoned P-2, Parks and Open Space with the remainder zoned RR-60, Rural Resource. Both zones support the land being used as a park, as does the remainder of the park area, which is zoned RR-60, Rural Resource. Although the commercial tenure at Waldo Cove is not part of the park, the RDEK's preference is that it will be in the future. The land occupied by the commercial tenure is zoned RES-1, Recreation Commercial, which is a zone used for commercial campgrounds.

3.5 Parks and Trails Regulation and Fee Bylaw

Adopted in 2019, the Parks and Trails Regulation and Fee Bylaw outlines regulations and fees related to the use and management of all parks within the RDEK and acts as an enforcement tool if required.

3.6 Lake Koocanusa Recreation Strategy

On a typical summer weekend, tens of thousands of people are recreating in the Koocanusa area. As the number of people recreating in the area increases, so do the impacts. The Koocanusa Recreation Steering Committee was established in 2014 to address the broad range of issues related to tourism and recreation on Crown land in Koocanusa. The steering committee, a partnership between the Province of BC, Ktunaxa National Council, Tobacco Plains Indian Band, RDEK and Columbia Basin Trust, commissioned the Lake Koocanusa Recreation Strategy to identify issues and make recommendations to mitigate the most significant impacts related to recreational use of Crown land in the Koocanusa area. The focus on the first phases of the strategy focus on the areas most impacted by recreational pressures. The strategies vision is: Crown land recreation use in the Koocanusa area is respectful of important ecological, cultural and resource values and reflects widespread adoption of a good stewardship ethic among recreation users. Local stakeholders and stewardship groups play a key role in recreation management. Waldo Cove is not one of the most impacted areas and thus not the focus of the initial stages of the strategy; however, creation of an RDEK park on Crown land certainly fits within the strategies vision for Lake Koocanusa.

4 Ecosystem and Habitat

4.1 Invasive Plants

Invasive plants are typically non-native plants that have been introduced to British Columbia without the insect predators and plant pathogens that help keep them in check in their native habitats. For this reason and because of their aggressive growth, non-native plants can be highly destructive, competitive and difficult to control.

The Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development administers the provincial *Weed Control Act*. As stated in the *Weed Control Act*, all land owners and occupiers in the Province of BC have a legal responsibility to control provincially and regionally listed invasive plants. The *Weed Control Act* is enforced within the East Kootenay through RDEK Bylaw No. 2711.

The RDEK will coordinate the management of invasive plants within Waldo Cove Regional Park as part of annual maintenance activities.

4.2 Wildlife

Winters in the valley bottoms around Lake Koocanusa are relatively short and have little snow, making the area an important environment for several kinds of wildlife. American Badger and Long-Billed Curlew are examples of listed species that may be seen in the Waldo Cove area. When the Koocanusa reservoir is drawn down in the late winter and spring, the exposed bed surface of Waldo Cove is important habitat for the Long-Billed Curlew.

4.3 Upland Vegetation

The warm and dry valley bottom is characterized by open grasslands and interspersed forested stands dominated by Ponderosa Pine as well as Douglas-fir in cooler aspects with more moisture. The Ponderosa Pine ecosystem has evolved with relatively frequent fire disturbance, which helps to maintain the characteristic open stands and grasslands. With decades of 'successful' fire suppression practices, many parts of the landscape are now uncharacteristically covered in denser stands of trees and brush than would normally be seen in an ecosystem historically characterized by a relatively high fire return interval.

4.4 Natural Hazards

4.4.1 Alluvial Fans and Flooding

The South Country Zoning and Floodplain Management Bylaw outlines applicable floodplain regulations for the Waldo Cove area. Siting a building or structure with habitable space is not contemplated within Waldo Cove Regional Park. Siting a picnic shelter or gazebo would be exempt from the floodplain regulations. No alluvial fans or hazard areas are identified at Waldo Cove at the time of drafting this Park Management Plan.

4.4.2 Wildfire

Waldo Cove Regional Park is identified as being in an area with high wildfire hazard rating. The RDEK will align vegetation maintenance procedures at the park with FireSmart principles.



Figure 5: Long-Billed Curlew



Figure 6: Waldo Cove Bed Surface Exposed During Low Water

5 Park Vision

5.1 Goal

Provide seasonal public lake access, interpretive opportunities and day use of park facilities for residents of Baynes Lake, Electoral Area B and beyond.

5.2 Key Management Issues

Through consultation with the FOLKS, property owners adjacent to the park and several site visits, key management issues and recommended actions were identified:

- **Parking and traffic:** The concrete boat ramp is increasingly being used to launch motor boats and the trucks and trailers occupy much of the available parking and can cause safety concerns for the pedestrians using the area. The popularity is attributed to the growing popularity of Lake Koocanusa, as well as the concrete boat launch at Waldo Cove being free, whereas other nearby launch areas are pay for use. Charging a fee for using the boat launch could incentivize boaters to utilize the purpose built RDEK Yaqakxaqłamki Regional Park 12 kilometers away. Should fees be charged, a fee system where residents of Baynes Lake and Electoral Area B, who pay into the park and recreation service area which funds Waldo Cove Regional Park, pay less than visitors and others who reside outside of the RDEK is supported.
- **Vehicles accessing the drawdown area:** During winter months, water that was retained by the Libby Dam during the summer is released and the bed surface of the reservoir at Waldo Cove is exposed. This exposed bed surface is part of a Wildlife Management Area (WMA) meant to protect fledgling Long Billed Curlew. Vehicles are not permitted on the bed surface in accordance with the WMA as they are a threat to the red-listed Long Billed Curlew. Another impact of vehicles on the bed surface is that the hardened 'crust' on the surface is broken, making the fine particulate more readily available for uptake by wind, which can contribute to erosion and dust issues. Barrier rock is installed along the road edge and there is a gate across the boat launch that is used to control unauthorized vehicle access of the drawdown area. The effectiveness of the existing rock and gate will be monitored and if required, additional barrier rocks could be added in the future.
- **Lack of washroom facilities at Sandy Beach:** The south end of the park is aptly known as Sandy Beach. This beach can be accessed via a rustic trail from the parking area or directly from the water. There are currently no washroom facilities at Sandy Beach and adjacent private properties have been impacted. Constructing a trail to Sandy Beach along the historic rail grade will allow the public to access the beach from the main Waldo Cove parking area and serve as a maintenance road that can be used to supply and service portable toilets on a seasonal basis.
- **Mooring buoys:** Mooring buoys are not regulated in Waldo Cove and an increasing number turn up every spring. At the time of drafting this park management plan, there were approximately 40 buoys in the Waldo Cove. Regulating and enforcing the presence of mooring buoys is a complex project and outside of the scope of normal park operations. Addressing the issue as a stand-alone project or including in another RDEK or Provincial land use planning process is recommended.

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- Interpretive opportunities: There is an opportunity to educate park users about the First Nations history and historic town of Waldo. Partnering with the Ktunaxa Nation and local residents will be critical in developing a relevant and educational interpretive experience.
 - Archaeological resources: The Ktunaxa have inhabited and used the land and its resources in the present-day Lake Koocanusa area for thousands of years. Recorded and unrecorded archaeological sites are protected by the Province through the Heritage Conservation Act. Extensive development is not planned for Waldo Cove Regional Park, but some of the capital projects will require a limited amount of soil disturbance. When carrying out these projects, an archaeologist will be retained to observe and advise on archaeological considerations.
 - Invasive plants are a concern of local area residents and is an ongoing priority for all RDEK public facilities. Invasive plant management is considered as a regular maintenance item and accounted for in the annual operating budget.

5.3 Public Safety

The RDEK prides itself on the quality of services provided to the public including the condition of RDEK parks in relation to public safety. To reduce the risk of liability associated with park use by the public, the RDEK has developed a detailed park inspection policy which includes frequency and content of inspections and encompasses all aspects of park use in relation to public safety.

5.4 Commercial Tenure

A commercial tenure exists within the park area. From research and interviews with local residents familiar with the matter, it appears the original FOLKS and commercial tenures were granted as a compromise of sorts. The commercial tenure was applied for to formalize an illegal occupation of Crown land created by several 'campsites' located along Waldo Cove, while the FOLKS tenure was applied for as an attempt to preserve public use and access to Waldo Cove in perpetuity. Rather than grant one tenure over the other, each interest was granted some rights to use the area. The current commercial tenure is set to expire on June 1, 2022 and it is the RDEK's intention to work with the current commercial tenure holder to voluntarily relinquish this tenure. The seven private recreational vehicles currently benefiting from occupying the commercial tenure could be moved to the upland property owned by the tenure holder, a portion of which is zoned for and currently used as a commercial campground, and the Crown land can then be included in the RDEK's tenure area for the park and would be available for the use and enjoyment of the public.

5.5 Partnership and Collaboration

The FOLKS were formed with the mission of preserving public access, recreational opportunities and promoting the history of Waldo Cove in perpetuity. Two tenure areas were eventually secured in favour of the FOLKS and with the help of dedicated volunteers and creative fundraising, managed these areas for approximately 18 years. The FOLKS no longer hold tenure in Waldo Cove, but continue to be an active group with an interest in Waldo Cove. The FOLKS have a proven ability to fundraise, secure grant funding and maintain the park area. Continuing the partnership between the FOLKS and the RDEK is encouraged in order to provide the best possible public service with the

lowest financial burden to the RDEK and local residents. FOLKS provide a strong volunteer base for park maintenance and operation and have fundraising capacity which can be leveraged for future capital projects. Should the RDEK one day resolve to relinquish their tenure and interest in managing a park at Waldo Cove, the RDEK will support the FOLKS with an application to the Province for a transfer of the tenure or an application to acquire a new tenure over Waldo Cove to ensure public enjoyment of Waldo Cove in perpetuity.



Figure 7: Off-Road Vehicle Use on Bed Surface of Koocanusa



Figure 8: Mooring Buoys in Waldo Cove (June 21, 2018)

6 PRIORITY ACTIONS AND COST ESTIMATES

The following is a list of potential improvements to Waldo Cove Regional Park. It is a guideline and does not commit the RDEK to any particular course of action or investment in park infrastructure. The proposed timeframe for the improvements may change depending on future funding, human resource capacity and community involvement. The improvements could be funded through allocating funds through the annual budgeting process. Should a community or stewardship group be interested in performing maintenance or enhancement activities at the park, alternative funding mechanisms could include community fundraising efforts or working with the Electoral Area Director to secure discretionary grant-in-aid funding. The Waldo Cove Regional Park Management Plan will be periodically reviewed by the RDEK. The plan will also be considered during the preparation of five-year financial plans.

Basic operational and maintenance items such as removing danger trees and invasive plant control are not included in the following list as they are considered to be regular maintenance items included in the annual operating budget.

<u>2020 - 2030</u>	<u>Estimated Cost</u>
Amend RDEK tenure with MFLNRORD to include commercial tenure area upon relinquishment or expiry	1,000
Regulatory signage as required	2,000
Construct trail from parking area to Sandy Beach	10,000
*Archaeological assessment for outhouse installation (x2)	6,000
**Portable toilet	10,000
Lock box for boat launch payments	1,000
Interpretive area trail and gazebo upgrades	5,000
Interpretive signage	TBD
Fire Pits	3,000
***Picnic tables	2,500
<u>Possible Future Improvements</u>	
Sign kiosk and replacement signage	4,000
TOTAL	\$44,500

*Outhouse install will be funded through grants received by the FOLKS.

**Portable toilet is \$1,000/year for supply and pick up.

***Picnic tables budgeted at 1 per year at \$250 per table.

Costs of interpretive signage are TBD as they will be developed in collaboration with FOLKS fundraising opportunities.