Alexander Creek AMA – Oct 12, 2013
Introduction

The October/November Access Management Compliance and Enforcement Program (AMCEP) Report is the fifth and final monthly report for the 6 month period for 2013 completed by Conservation Officer (CO) Burley. The final 2013 AMCEP Report will be completed by January 2014.

The month of October started off with a complaint of a shot and injured grizzly bear on Oct 2nd just east of Fernie Alpine Resort’s boundary. CO Burley and CO Garay attended to the complainant’s residence where a statement was taken. On Oct 3rd CO Burley and CO Deboon attended the area where the complainant had first seen the sow and two large cubs while on his hike. The CO’s found a buried moose carcass that was being fed upon by the grizzlies. Adjacent to that site is where the hikers encountered the 3 bears. The CO’s were able to follow a blood trail from the injured sow, but could not continue as the trail dropped down to a creek and thick alders impeding the CO’s visual and hearing capabilities. It was undetermined if the sow survived or not, but the two cubs were large enough that they could survive the winter. The area southeast of the ski hill’s boundary and the Westside of Fernie Provincial Park were closed for 2 weeks to give the bears time to move on. There were no further sightings of these bears reported to the COS.

October 5th was the opening day of the cow elk Limited Entry Draw (LEH). CO Burley patrolled the Grave Prairie AMA for hunters as this area is known to have cow elk (fig 1). A number of hunting campers were checked in the area where the hunters were given the Outdoor Access Guide (OAG) and educated on the non-motorized road closures. The seasonally opened roads in Grave Prairie AMA closed on Oct 1st. Within the 5 days of the roads being closed a number of public complaints had been sent to CO Burley mentioning that trucks were observed driving into or out of the gas line road (parallel to Hwy 43). CO Burley received a complaint that two illegal mule deer were shot and the hunters were self-reporting their violation which is the ethical and legal way of reporting a mistake. The mule deer were seized in Sparwood and given to the food bank. Statements were obtained and tickets were issued. When hunters make mistakes, they are to report it to the RAPP line immediately where a CO will follow up and investigate the situation. To date, at least 5 elk (cows and bulls) were found by other hunters that were shot and left in the Grave Prairie/Big Range AMA area alone. These animals should never have been shot or not left in the bush to spoil. On Oct 13, CO Burley conducted a road block on the Grave Prairie Rd where she checked 25 hunters. 2 Warning Tickets (WT) were issued for incorrect species licences, 1 warning ticket for an AMA violation and 2 firearms were seized from 2 youth whom did not have appropriate firearms licences. A responsible adult with the appropriate licences was contacted and picked up the firearms.
Figure 1: This photo was not taken the opening day of cow elk LEH, but soon after it closed. The photo was taken northeast of the Grave Prairie AMA boundary.

On Oct 6th a prescribed burn was completed off of Cutt’s Rd in Sheep Mountain AMA that utilized 18 members of the Wildfire Management Branch and a crew from the Strategic Fire Control Section. B.J. Randall Harris, RPF, Team Leader Ecosystem Restoration of the Rocky Mountain Resource District mentioned in an email ‘that a lot of the area was blackened and appeared to meet prescription requirements, bitter brush top killed and Lewis’ Woodpecker nest trees were protected prior to light up.’ The area was patrolled for a couple days after to ensure the hotspots were contained. Prescribed burns are planned in areas in need of grassland restoration which benefits the ecosystem, wildlife and habitat.
During this busy time of year for CO’s it is found that the Officers are responding to more complaints that come in from the public then they are able to find while in the field. This is called being reactive compared to being proactive. The public helps the CO’s by reporting a high number of hunting violations directly to them or better yet through the RAPP line. When the public observes a violation, they can record a plate number associated to the vehicle in use and write down details of the suspects/violation. The CO’s then have to investigate the occurrences which take hours of office time and paperwork. If the suspect is issued a violation ticket (VT), the witness will have to agree to go to court if the suspect disputes the ticket. If the witness does not want to go to court then a ticket cannot be issued. CO Burley was told by the other CO’s in the Fernie office that they have been receiving more RAPP complaints related to AMA violations than ever before. The word is getting out to people. There are far more AMA supporters out there then there are violators. A Violation Ticket and Warning Ticket were issued to a hunter who was observed in the Upper Flathead AMA on October 10th. He admitted to being on a closed road and with further investigation other violations were admitted and dealt with by CO Burley.

A RAPP complaint was reported to CO Burley on Oct 12th for the Corbin AMA regarding Alberta campers with ATV’s camped in the closure and possibly could be hunting illegally. CO Burley responded and found a large campsite with 25 people north of the Tent Mountain Road. This area has traditionally allowed camping as there are not many areas for recreationists to camp in the Corbin area. The camping area north of Tent Mountain Rd is a sand pit/drill site where environmental damage is minimal. CO Burley educated the whole group around the campfire.
explaining where they can or cannot go with their ATV’s. The gas line is still part of the closure and is not open to the public to use. Their plate numbers were recorded in case the campsite was found to be a mess or for follow up non-compliance reports.

CO Burley continued her patrol after Corbin to Alexander Creek AMA for another AMA complaint. Since the hunting season opened the Deadmans Pass Forest Service Road (FSR) has had a high number of complaints. It is a remote location where CO Burley felt a trail camera would help her catch the people violating the Wildlife Regulations. The road had been deactivated/ditched approximately 1.5 KM’s north up the road by Canfor. While CO Burley was turning her truck around by the ditch, 3 ATV’er were seen travelling towards her. She turned on her emergency lights which indicated for them to stop, but instead they quickly turned around and fled the other way. This is when CO Burley turned her sirens on to make it more obvious for the group to stop. They continued on to the Deadmans Pass ATV Trail that continues to Alberta. Those violators knew they were in the wrong and just made the situation worse by fleeing from a Peace Officer. CO Burley checked the trail camera a week later where a number of hiking hunters (fig 4), trucks and wildlife were caught on camera, but no ATV’ers. One truck was permitted to be in the area (Canfor) and the other truck is being investigated.

Figure 3: Deadmans Pass in Alexander Creek AMA
Figure 4: Hunters hiking on the Deadmans Pass non-motorized closed road. Trucks were driving up this road almost daily ruining the hunt for the ethical hunters. This photo was captured on a trail camera CO Burley posted Oct 12 for 1 week.

Between Oct 17th and 23rd four black bears had to be euthanized in Fernie and Hosmer. People who leave their garbage outside continue to be the main problem why these bears have to be put down. A number of days were committed by CO Burley from her AMCEP time in Oct to patrol for problem bears, setting traps, dealt with public complaints and phone calls, euthanizing bears, cleaning traps and educating the public. Two family units were reported roaming the streets of Fernie throughout the month feeding on garbage and fruit trees in people’s back yards. The bears were monitored until they had move out of town to hibernate. As of Nov 16th, a black bear is still feeding on garbage in Elkford. CO Garay conducted a Bear Attractant Audit in the Elk Valley hoping to help the public stay safe and prevent bears from being euthanized. Below is CO Garay’s Report:

‘On Thursday October 31st the second annual East Kootenay Zone - Bear Attractant Management Initiative Project came to a close. Over two days, one Bear Aware Coordinator from the Elk Valley, two Natural Resource Officers from Cranbrook, one Conservation Officer from the East Kootenay Zone, one Bylaw officer from Elkford and one Bylaw Officer from Fernie canvassed door to door in the communities of Elkford and Fernie, reminding the public to manage their bear attractants and the penalties under the community bylaws and the BC Wildlife Act for failing to do so. The original project was proposed for June 20th and 21st, 2013, due to an unforeseen flood event in the entire Elk Valley the Fernie Audit was postponed until October 28, 2013. This worked out well since there were more bears in Fernie at this time and bear complaints were up also being just prior to Halloween when children would be trick or
treating into the evening hours, it blended in well with informing people that public safety is one of the reasons for good bear attractant management practices. Due to the flood event in June the planned CTV interview for the project was cancelled. A newspaper article was released just prior to the October audit. You can view the article by googling: http://www.thefreepress.ca/news/229475551.html

Elkford Project Results June 20, 2013
Unfortunately the Elkford audit on June 20, 2013, occurred the day of garbage collection day so the garbage bins were already empty by the time the team arrived. It was difficult to get an idea of who was actually storing garbage outside prior to garbage day. After the Elkford audit CO Garay and Bear Aware Coordinator Kathy Murray attended a meeting in Elkford with Elkford’s Superintendent of Public Works, Duncan McDonald, and Bylaw officer, Bernie Vantingham. Garay and Murray wanted to address concerns of bear attractants at the Elkford District Campground. Duncan McDonald informed them that the District of Elkford has modified their garbage cans at the campground so that a carabineer can be attached to the lid making it more difficult for bears to get into the container. CO Garay and Bear Aware Coordinator Kathy Murray also suggested that they look at building a compound similar to their wood storage enclosure next to the office to contain the garbage containers in the future. Duncan McDonald seemed receptive to this idea. He also informed CO Garay and Bear Aware Coordinator Kathy Murray that the District of Elkford can only afford to purchase approximately 20 of the new locking garbage cans for the public each year. They will try to distribute them first to people who have no sheds or garages to lock up their garbage.

Elkford Project Statistics June 20, 2013
• number of people contacted = 53
• Number of houses Attended = 62
• Name of the subdivision = Natal Subdivision, Cariboo Drive, Needles Subdivision
• Name of any golf courses attended = 0
• Name of any camp grounds attended = Elkford District Campground
• Name of any businesses attended = 0
• The number of Bear Aware information pamphlets distributed = 55
• Number of Dangerous Wildlife Protection Orders Issued = 0
• Number of Warnings Issued = 0
• Number of Charges issued = 0

Total CO Time Spent = 10 hrs

Fernie Project Results, October 28, 2013
The Fernie audit was very encouraging by the fact that the audit was conducted the day before garbage collection day and there were only about three locations where garbage was found in the garbage containers, the rest of the containers inspected were empty. Fruit trees are still an issue and more public education and enforcement may have to take place before the public comes into line with managing this type of bear attractant. Otherwise both CO Garay and Bear Aware Coordinator Kathy Murray felt that the message of managing one’s garbage to eliminate attracting bears is slowly starting to come around in Fernie. It also seemed that peer pressure
amongst neighbors was having an effect on how people managed their bear attractants which is good.

Fernie Project Statistics October 28, 2013

• number of people contacted = 55
• Number of houses Attended = 45
• Name of the subdivision = West Fernie, Ridgemont, Annex, Airport, Slolem Drive
• Name of any golf courses attended = 0
• Name of any businesses attended = 0
• The number of Bear Aware information pamphlets distributed = 45
• Number of Dangerous Wildlife Protection Orders Issued = 0
• Number of Warnings Issued = 0
• Number of Charges issued = 0

Total CO Time Spent = 10 hrs’

The Elk Valley Integrated Task Force Team held a meeting on Oct 17th in Sparwood at the Tourism Centre. CO Burley provided a presentation to the group on her 2012 Report and the current year. Doug Martin, Habitat Biologist, also attended the meeting and was able to answer any questions the group had for him. The group has been supportive of the AMCEP. CO Burley will keep all groups, clubs and stakeholders up to date every year with the program’s progress.

On Oct 18th and 20th CO Burley attended the Canadian Avalanche Centre’s Avalanche Peer Training in Castlegar and Fernie. CO Burley is one of two CO’s that has the CAC Avalanche Operation Level 1 certificate and instructs enforcement agencies the Avalanche Skills Training Level 1 (AST1) Course by snowshoe or snowmobile. All CO’s throughout BC are required by WCB and their backcountry travel policy to have the AST1 course. Training is required yearly in order to keep refreshed on the winter backcountry survival skills.

Chauncey, Todhunter, Weigert Creek and the Upper Elk Valley (UEV) AMA also get abused in October and November. Numerous complaints came to the CO’s attention for these AMAs. CO Burley and the other Fernie CO’s patrolled to these areas when they had time. Some of the complaints that are reported do not have plate numbers associated to the file, but the reports still help the CO’s know where non-compliance is happening. During the sheep hunting season the Dry Creek and Todhunter Roads in the Chauncey Todhunter AMA seem to get traffic driving up and down them, even at dark (fig 5 and 8). CO Burley put a trail camera on the Todhunter Rd (fig 8), but plate numbers could not be identified for investigation. Weigert and the UEV AMA’s have had most of their signs torn down so people cannot see where the closed roads are. Hunters still have to research maps before they go out to these areas to be aware of closed roads, even with no signs. The people who rip the signs down are in violation of the Wildlife Act and could be fined $345 or go to court. More trail cameras will be utilized in these areas in the future. Volunteer groups throughout the Valley have offered to take time to help post new signs. CO Burley will be meeting with these groups in the future to coordinate this task. Unfortunately between Oct 21-22 the new East Ewin Side Draw gate that was constructed in September by the Elkford Rod and Gun Club was vandalized (fig 6). Someone had pulled the
whole gate down by a winch, drove in and then put the gate back in the holes making it inoperable. The Elkford Rod and Gun Club repaired the gate during the second week of November. The Sparwood Fish and Wildlife Club are in the process of trying to get approval to put another gate in the Chauncey Todhunter AMA on the Todhunter Rd.

Figure 5: End of Dry Creek open road. Closed sign is on the left hand side of photo.
Figure 6: The East Ewin Side Draw gate was vandalised between Oct 21\textsuperscript{st} - 22\textsuperscript{nd}.

Figure 7: Chauncey Todhunter AMA.
Figure 8: Cow and calf elk caught on hidden camera drinking from a puddle on the Todhunter Rd which is a seasonally closed road (closed Sept 1-June 15).

On Oct 25th, CO Burley drove to the Crowsnest Pass where she met with the Alberta Quad Squad Director and Executives based out of Coleman, the Blairmore SRD Lands Officers at the Ranger Station and the Hagley’s at the Inn on the Border. The objective of the meetings was to discuss proactive approaches to the AB/BC non-motorized closure issues. The Quad Squad members are active supporters of the AMA’s in BC, as they do not want to see any other motorized backcountry travel routes closed. They are educated on the BC closures and have descriptive maps at their office available for purchase that include the BC AMA boundaries. The Quad Squad are there to help educate ATV’er on all the road closures. The Executives said that they do not have many dirt bikers as part of their group, which is a growing concern as the dirt bike community is starting to push their boundaries in the closed areas (on top of mountains). The Land Officers gave CO Burley some good ideas on how to build blockades for closed roads that are inexpensive and easy to build (fig 9). The Land Officers offered to help post signs at the border and might build some new maps that would show the BC AMA maps on them. The BC Outdoor Access Guide was delivered to the Blairmore Husky Gas Station, Quad Squad Office, SRD Ranger Station, Blairmore Fish and Wildlife Office, Crownest Pass Mountain Resort and the Inn on the Border.
CO Burley patrolled the Upper Flathead AMA on Nov 1st (fig 10-11). She was responding to a complaint of people abusing the closed roads off of the McClachie FSR. She observed ATV and truck tracks driving on closed areas. Only one group of hunters were checked while driving on the Lodgepole FSR that afternoon, but two trappers were checked on the McClatchie. They were just arriving at their cabin to set up for their trapline. It was the first time CO Burley met these trappers. Trappers in the Upper and East Flathead carry permits which exempt them from AMA closures. Other trappers from the Valley are exempted to the Motor Vehicle for Hunting Closed Areas only, unless they have a permit issued from the government saying otherwise. A letter will be sent out in 2014 by CO Burley to all trappers that have a registered trapline within AMA boundaries explaining these regulation requirements.
Figure 10: The McClachie Rd in the Upper Flathead AMA.
Figure 11: The McClachie Rd in the Upper Flathead AMA.

CO Burley spent Nov 2\textsuperscript{nd} working on AMA Outreach. She researched and contacted The Pass Crow Snow Riders, Elkford Snowmobile Association, Sparwood Elk Valley Mountaineers, Fernie Snowmobile Association and the Elk Valley Snowmobiling Club to book meetings to provide winter AMA education. Most meetings will take place in December and January after the AMCEP allotted time. CO Burley is also hoping to attend the Elkford Rod and Gun Club meeting on Nov 20. CO Burley will be attending the Fernie Court House on December 10\textsuperscript{th} where a Grave Prairie AMA Violation Ticket is being disputed. This is the second disputed AMA file she has had this year. For the previous court file; the AMA charges were upheld by the Judge (Violation Ticket had to be paid).

CO Burley attended the Frank J Mitchell Elementary School in Sparwood on Nov 5\textsuperscript{th} to provide a Career Day presentation for 1hr to a grade 6 class. One of the grade 6 students contacted CO Burley to ask her if she would do the presentation for her as she wants to be a CO when she grows up. CO Burley was impressed by the grade 6 students for their knowledge and interest in fish and wildlife. CO Burley continued her afternoon by patrolling the Galton Range AMA (fig12) for mule and whitetail deer hunters. She stopped at a junction on the Letcher and Willy Phillips Rd where she was able to check a number of hunters. The last group she came across had a number of wildlife infractions. CO Burley seized a 4X3pt mule deer and gave it to the Fernie Salvation Army. A violation ticket was issued to the hunter on Nov 19\textsuperscript{th} for failing to produce a mule deer licence. November is the busiest time of year for the Galton Range as it is a migration route for mule deer. Hunters will hunt in high elevations for the mule deer while the whitetails stay down low. The other CO’s from Cranbrook also helped patrol Sheep Mountain and Galton Range AMA’s throughout November. One report in late Oct was reported
to the CO’s for the Galtons that a mule deer doe was shot and left (there is no mule deer doe season).

Figure 12: Letcher Rd in the Galton Range AMA.

On Nov 14th it was reported to the CO’s in Fernie that a young cougar had attacked a dog on a residents back porch off of Dicken Rd. CO Burley contacted CO Connatty base out of Cranbrook who is one of two CO Houndsman’s that responds to cougar complaints. CO Burley attended the residence once CO Connatty arrived in Fernie with his 3 dogs. With more details from the complainant CO Connatty’s dogs soon caught the scent of the cougar. Within 3hrs of CO Connatty’s arrival, the young female emancipated cougar was treed by the dogs and euthanized (fig 13). Once the complainant and residents of the neighbourhood were notified of the success, the CO’s discovered that one of the hound dogs had punctures and wounds throughout its body and had to be taken to the Cranbrook vet. These dogs are highly trained hunters that put their lives at risk in order to help remove sick and dangerous cougars that are in close proximity to people. Both dogs injured from this cougar will make a full recovery.
Figure 13: Cougar that attacked a dog on a porch near Fernie on Nov 14th.
# Statistics

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Figure 14: Current Summary of total time spent in the field up to Nov 16, 2013.

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Figure 15: Current Summary of statistics up to November 16, 2013. The filtered numbers are for the months of Oct/Nov.
It should be noted that Officer Presence is calculated as the time Officer(s) were physically present in an AMA, it does not account for travel.

People that are educated are defined as COS discussing specific AMA facts and requirements for which the person in question was previously unaware. It should be noted that the Access Guardian Program and general AMA facts are discussed with more than 80% of contacts.

**Summary**

CO Burley also spent some time following up with Human Wildlife Occurrence Reports (HWOR) when other CO’s were not available (bear safety concerns or injured wildlife). In addition, Conservation Officer time is taken up in the office to deal with any HWOR’s, tickets, project reports or non-compliance investigations (photocopying, scanning etc.). CO Burley has been adding her time to the 2013 Excel spreadsheet when working on AMA investigations, the Outdoor Access Guide and working on the AMA Reports.

The people in the East Kootenay’s have such a great opportunity to explore the beauty of the Rockies which provides a variety of recreational experiences. CO Burley enjoys making contact with all these user groups and will continue to build a better understanding to the public of the laws and regulations that are built around them.

If you have any questions or concerns about the October/November AMA Report or questions for CO Burley, she can be contacted at:

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The Conservation Officer Service is a public safety provider focused on natural resource law enforcement and human wildlife conflicts prevention and response. Our Vision: To be a progressive and respected leader in environmental compliance and enforcement, shared stewardship and public safety. The Conservation Officer Service Motto is: Integrity, Service and Protection

Please see the attached Excel 2013 Stats for more detail of the Access Guardian’s patrols and outreach efforts from October to November 16, 2013.

Maps

To reduce document size, AMA maps have not been included in this report. If required maps of individual AMAs are available from two sources, the Ministry of Environment website (www.env.gov.bc.ca/kootenay/eco/accessmaps.htm) and the Hunting Regulations Synopsis. The hunting synopsis is available in print and online (www.env.gov.bc.ca/fw/wildlife/hunting/regulations/). The maps available from the MOE website are in colour and contain much greater detail. The MOE website has the Outdoor Access Guide available in a PDF document and the directions on how to use the iphone/ipad application called Avenza PDF Maps is provided.