



**wildsight**

2-495 Wallinger Avenue Kimberley BC V1A 1Z6 • 250.427.9325 • info@wildsight.ca

## **Media release: Proposed Galloway Lands development threatens critical wildlife corridor**

**December 14, 2021**

The Elk Valley is one of the most industrialized valleys in British Columbia. It is also one of the most important places in North America for wildlife connectivity. While most people are aware of the impact of forestry and mining, residential development is also a threat to key wildlife corridors and habitat.

The Galloway Lands is a residential development presently under rezoning consideration by the Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK). The acreage estate-style development proposed adjacent to Mt Fernie Provincial Park would impact a key wildlife corridor that connects the Elk and the Columbia Valleys and beyond.

“The development is being marketed as a ‘Conservation Subdivision’ yet, if it were approved, would directly impact connectivity for wildlife that depend on this area,” says Randal Macnair, Wildsight’s Elk Valley Conservation Coordinator. “This area is recognized for its importance to carnivore connectivity in the Canadian Rockies, and is a multi-species movement zone for animals such as grizzly bears and wolverines.”

The subdivision of 74 multi-million dollar acreage properties would significantly impact some of the best valley bottom habitat on the lower west side of Lizard Creek for large mammals. Extensive movement by resident GPS-collared female grizzly bears has been documented in the area and the land also contains high value moose habitat, which is limited in this part of the Elk Valley.

Large mammals such as grizzlies and moose need corridors that have significant buffers. Severing secure movement options could lead to increased wildlife-human conflict, compromising public safety and conservation.

While developers state that 70% of the land will be ‘conservation areas’, these areas are frequently proposed on land that is unbuildable due to steep slopes or are divided into covenants on private lots. The acreage-style lots leave little room for wildlife to move, nor do they align with the RDEK’s Official Community Plan, which recommends developments utilize

compact neighbourhood design with dwelling units built in close proximity to each other to minimize the overall development footprint.

The north side of the property directly abuts Lizard Creek, which is not only a key wildlife corridor, but also an important Westslope cutthroat trout spawning habitat. This development proposes 74 septic systems to be installed next to Lizard Creek and other tributaries on the property.

“It’s imperative that the RDEK considers water quality for the biodiversity, wildlife, and Elk Valley residents that depend on our watershed for clean water before amending the zoning to allow this development to go forward,” Macnair says.

Grizzlies and other wildlife will face dire consequences if we continue with piecemeal approval of developments in the Lizard Creek and other connectivity corridors. We recently learned that 2021 was a devastating year for bears being destroyed due to human conflict. Development like this would very likely make this problem worse.

“We can’t keep expanding our human development footprint in this valley and just expect bears and other wildlife to change their behaviour in order to avoid conflict and survive,” Says Macnair. “People chose to live and stay in Fernie because we love the mountains and rivers, and the people and wildlife we share this special place with. Elk Valley municipalities, the RDEK and the provincial government need to listen to locals and work together to make sure wildlife connectivity is maintained throughout the valley we call home.”

On January 13, 2022, this development application is scheduled to be considered for introduction by the RDEK Board. After this time, an official public comment period and public hearing will be announced.

-30-

For more information, contact:

Randal Macnair, Wildsight Elk Valley Conservation Coordinator

[randal@wildsight.ca](mailto:randal@wildsight.ca), 250-423-7461

Photo:

[https://wildsight.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/grizzly-walking-on-shore\\_7837-credit-JanaMalinek.jpg](https://wildsight.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/grizzly-walking-on-shore_7837-credit-JanaMalinek.jpg) - Photo Credit Jana Malinek