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Contact us:
PO Box 4144
Williams Lake, BC
V2G 2V2
Website:
www.friendsofchurn.ca

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Winter 2017

Upcoming Events

AGM

The 2017 FCCPAS AGM will be held on **Saturday** April 22nd, at the Dog Creek Community gymnasium. The meeting will commence at 10:00 am and be followed by a hot lunch at a cost of \$10.00. A short hike is planned in the Protected Area for in the afternoon as long as the weather cooperates. Contact Peter Opie at peter&skye@telus.net for more information or if you are interested in becoming a Director.

Activities Update

2016 Hikes in Churn Creek P.A.

Table Mountain to Churn Field. On June 5th, with the permission of the Gang Ranch, about a dozen members hiked from Bear Springs over Table Mountain and along the north rim of Churn Creek Gorge down to Churn Field and the Gang Ranch Road. This hike provides outstanding views of Churn Flats, Dry Lake Pasture and Churn Creek Gorge. Although the heat kept most wildlife hidden, there were



some birding opportunities and we were able to investigate an old badger burrow and an original corner post from one of the earliest surveyed lots in the area.

Activities Update continued

Jack Bishop homestead to Onion Lakes.

On August 14th, members hiked from the Iron Gate Road through the old Jack Bishop homestead and back to the lower end of the Iron Gate Road. A water spring, an old caved-in root cellar, a patch of rhubarb, and remnants of an old flood irrigation system all confirmed where the homestead once stood. We also followed sections of the old ditch line that diverted water from Koster Creek to the mining operations at Onion Bar. Examining growth rings of some trees along the ditch suggested it had been built more than 100 years ago. After lunch hikers enjoyed impressive views of the Fraser River canyon while overlooking Onion Lakes.



Remnants of an old ditch line

News from BC Parks/Churn Creek Protected Area

- 1. No Staking Reserve Established:** The eastern boundary of CCPA is currently the natural high water mark of the Fraser River. In February 2016, the Mineral Titles Branch established a no-staking reserve extending from the current boundary of CCPA to the middle tread of the river. This reserve prohibits further mineral staking within this area, presumably in consideration of adding the area to CCPA in the future.
- 2. Increased funding for BC Parks:** As part of the BC Parks Future Strategy, the BC Government has recently announced increased funding for BC Parks. Many aspects of the strategy could benefit CCPA such as the hiring of additional back country rangers. Check out <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2017ENV0009-000231> for more details.

Membership and Donations

It is the time again to renew your membership. Please consider encouraging a friend to join because without a strong membership base, FCCPAS cannot continue to conduct valuable projects within Churn Creek Protected Area. FCCPAS is a registered charity. Receipts for income tax purposes can be provided for all donations other than membership. Individual (\$20) and family (\$30) memberships are available. Membership forms are available on our website (www.friendsofchurn.ca)

Project Updates

High Lake Restoration Project: Completing the Second Year

Friends of Churn Creek focused their energy in 2016 on completing the preburn slashing phase of the High Lake Grassland and Open Forest Restoration project. Felling, delimiting, bucking and piling were completed under a contract with forestry crews from Stswecem'c Xgat'tem Development Ltd Partnership. As last year, funding was provided by the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation (HCTF), Cariboo-Chilcotin Ecosystem Restoration Committee (CCERC) and



SXDLP crew piling slashed encroachment stems for burning.



On-site project review and planning tour with representatives of BC Parks, Cariboo Fire Centre, Ecosystem Restoration Committee and FCCPAS

the BC Parks Park Enhancement Fund (PEF). FCCPAS volunteers stayed busy monitoring ungulate pellet plots, measuring tree stems in vegetation plots, counting and measuring slash piles, and removing invasive plants. BC Parks staff will burn the slash piles. FCCPAS also coordinated successful field tours with representatives from BC Parks, Cariboo Fire Centre, CCERC and HCTF. See the 2016 Newsletter for further information on this project. Contact Peter Opie if you are able to help out for a day or two next summer to finalize treatments and continue monitoring of plots.

Grassland Restoration Strategy Development

Friends of Churn Creek directors believe that a strategy needs to be developed for treating the very extensive area of grasslands being lost to tree encroachment within the protected area. Following discussions with BC Parks staff, we have initiated a project to map and prioritize encroachment areas for treatment. We expect to develop several shelf-ready project proposals which we could submit when funding is available. Initial mapping within a test area is currently underway and initial ground truthing of maps is planned for summer 2017. Criteria for prioritizing treatment areas will include size and density of encroachment, vehicle accessibility, wildlife species at risk habitat values, and suitability for long term maintenance as grassland.

Feature Article

Red and Blue Listed Plant Species in Churn Creek Protected Area

The BC Ministry of Environment's Conservation Data Centre (CDC) rates and publically reports the conservation status of all native species and ecosystems in British Columbia. Species on the CDC "red list" (approx. 242) are those whose continued existence in BC is considered to be imperiled because of rarity or some factor making them especially vulnerable to extinction within the Province. Species on the "blue list" (approx. 369) are considered by the CDC to be of special concern because their existence is particularly sensitive to human activities or natural events. They are mostly rare or very uncommon.

More than 30% of the species on the red and blue lists in British Columbia occur in grassland landscapes, even though grasslands cover less than 1% of the province. Consequently, grassland parks and protected areas, such as Churn Creek Protected Area (CCPA), play an especially important role in conserving the red and blue listed species and ecosystems of the province.

Thirty-seven red or blue listed animal species are known or suspected to occur within CCPA. These include several bird species as well as amphibians, reptiles, and mammals.

Forty-three red or blue listed vascular plant species have been reported in CCPA or in nearby areas in grassland/dry Douglas-fir forest landscapes similar to those of CCPA. Three species which have been recorded in CCPA are:

American chamaerhodos (*Chamaerhodos erecta nuttalii*) is blue listed and rare throughout BC east of the Cascades.



American chamaerhodos



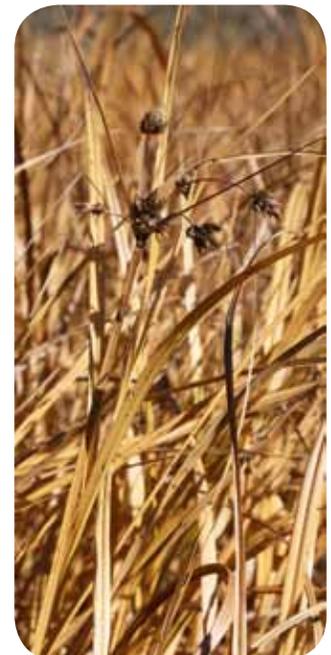
Silver Orache

Three occurrences have been recorded in CCPA. It is a biennial herb growing on dry grasslands, usually with sandy or gravelly soils.

Silvery orache (*Atriplex argentea argentea*) is a red listed species that is rare in south central and southeast BC. Two occurrences have been recorded in CCPA. It is an annual herb growing

in dry grasslands with saline or disturbed soils.

River bulrush (*Bolboschoenus fluviatilis*) is a blue listed species that is rare on southern Vancouver Island and in south central BC. It was reported in CCPA but recent expert study interestingly suggests the population in CCPA is a hybrid between the rare river bulrush and the more common seacoast bulrush (*B. maritimus paludosus*). River bulrush is a perennial that occurs in marshes, river riparian areas and on lakeshores in grassland landscapes.



River bulrush
(River bulrush x
seacoast bulrush
hybrid?)