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Number 5

Winter 2014

Upcoming Events

AGM

The 2014 FCCPAS AGM will be held on **Saturday May 3, 2014** beginning at 10:00 a.m. at the Dog Creek Community Gymnasium. A brief business session will be followed by a light lunch (\$10) and an afternoon hike into Churn! We are also planning a daylong hike on the following day and some of us will be camping Saturday night. If you are a member or just interested, please come. Contact Ordell Steen (oasteen@shaw.ca) if you have questions or would like to become of director of FCCPAS.

New Gateway Trail Opening

The **official opening ceremony** for the new Churn Creek Gateway Trail and associated facilities will be on **September 20, 2014**. Please see the description below (Project Updates) of this new fully accessible trail, constructed by the FCCPAS and partners.

Activities Update

Hikes in 2013

1. Green Gate to old cabin near Dry Lake.

This short hike along the trail from the first campsite (Green Gate) on the Iron Gate Road was enjoyed by about 12 people in April. Highlights were exploration of the old abandoned cabin near the trail and observing grassland and forest plants and soils.



Activities Update continued



Looking across Churn Canyon to Churn Flats

2. Goose Lakes to Wycott Flats

In May, about 10 members of the FCCPAS spent a very pleasant day exploring the grasslands on the north side of Churn Creek. The trail to Wycott Flats provided spectacular views of Churn Creek Canyon and Churn Flats. A short side trip off the trail was made to view the old two story log house and barn constructed by William Wycott nearly 100 years ago.

2014 Planned Hikes. BC Parks is currently completing a new map of trails in the Protected Area. A goal of the FCCPAS is to hike most of these trails, place trail markers where needed, and document trail features, both natural history and cultural. In 2014, we will organize 3 - 4 hikes to explore some of the newly mapped and designated trails. The first hike will be a short, relatively easy hike on the afternoon of May 3, following the AGM. The second will be a longer hike on Sunday, May 4. When locations have been selected, notice will be sent to all members.

Project Updates

Churn Creek Gateway Trail

During the past year, the FCCPAS, in cooperation with BC Parks and the Cariboo Regional District, constructed a 450 m long, wheelchair accessible interpretive trail at the site where the visitors kiosk was built in 2011/12 (see 2013 Newsletter). In addition, a wheelchair accessible pit toilet, picnic table, two benches and a fence around the entire site were constructed this past year. The trail was constructed to park standards for wheelchair accessibility. Seven interpretive signs are currently being prepared and will be placed at the side of the trail in the coming summer. The kiosk and trail, together with



Churn Creek
Gateway Project
site



Project Updates continued



Trailhead sign prepared by FCCPAS for new trail

the petroglyph rock placed by the Stswecem'c-Xgat'tem and High Bar First Nations, provide a visitor destination as well as a gateway interpretive site at the main entrance to the protected area. Funding for the trail and associated facility construction was provided by the BC Community Recreation Program, BC Parks, FCCPAS, Williams Lake Rotary, Northern Development Initiative Trust, Stswecem'c-Xgat'tem First Nation, Cariboo Regional District and C-C Beetle Action Coalition.

Ancient petroglyph rock placed on Gateway Trail site by Stswecem'c - Xgat'tem and High Bar First Nations



Interpretation Panels for New Kiosk

The last two interpretation panels by the FCCPAS for the new information kiosk were completed early last year and have been added to the kiosk. Topics are precontact First Nations occupation of the area and effects of settlement on First Nations. BC Parks is currently completing the final four panels for the kiosk, including an exciting new map of trails in the protected area.

Membership and Donations

Friends of Churn Creek Protected Area Society cannot continue without support of members and donors. Now is the time to renew your membership and encourage a friend to join. Volunteers are always welcome!

FCCPAS is a charitable society and receipts for income tax purposes can be provided for all donations other than membership. Membership fees remain at \$20, due for renewal by April 1, 2014.

Membership forms are available on our website (www.friendsofchurn.ca)

California Big Horn Sheep Population Status in Churn Creek Protected Area

California Bighorn Sheep numbers continue to remain low within Churn Creek Protected Area. Sheep numbers peaked in the mid 1990's at 600-700 animals for the entire Fraser-Churn population in Wildlife Management Unit 5-03. These impressive numbers were followed by a period of poor lamb recruitment with sheep numbers concurrently declining to about the 120-140 animal range by 2003.

The sheep population then appeared to stabilize for a few years during a period of improved lamb survival. Although lamb recruitment has continued to remain reasonable since 2010, sheep numbers appear to have now dipped below 100 animals. There are currently likely less than 40 migratory sheep wintering in the Churn/Wycott Flats area and less than 60 resident sheep wintering in Churn Creek Protected Area.



With the presence of a healthy mule deer population wintering along the west side of the Fraser River, both cougar and wolf numbers are believed to have responded positively to this large prey base. Even with generous hunting seasons in place to harvest some of these predators, some people who have closely followed this situation believe that the current abundance of predators in this area is negatively affecting bighorn sheep. The cumulative effect of all mortality factors may now be keeping the sheep population suppressed at critically low levels.

Efforts are now underway to identify options to recover the local sheep populations. Last spring the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation announced the approval of over \$30,000.00 in funding for sheep recovery planning to the Wild Sheep Society of BC. According to a press release the project involves the evaluation of the status of and threats to the Junction, Churn Creek and Churn/Camelsfoot California Bighorn Sheep sub-populations. Project details include the development of a comprehensive, herd specific species Recovery Plan and preparation of Enhancement Project proposals of which the main objective will be to implement enhancement actions specified in the Recovery Plan. Further details of the project will be passed along as they become available.