

“HUMAN BEINGS NEED PLACES UNCHANGED BY THEMSELVES”:

Defining and Debating Wilderness in the West Kootenays, 1969-74

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As a citizen and taxpayer living in the Kootenay Lake area for over half a century ... I wish to register a most vigorous protest against the undertaking or continuation of any form of logging and its allied operations on Fry Creek and Carney Creek.¹

Profit [is] only being seen in terms of money not in terms of clean air, pure water and virgin forest and creek areas. I ask you to please spare Fry Creek.²

Certainly, we believe in conservation, and planned use of our natural resources. But not a massive wilderness park to meet the demands of an emotional few at the expense of thousands of us who want to maintain our standard of living and to raise our families in health and happiness.³

THESE THREE QUOTES ARE drawn from letters and petitions written by residents of the Kootenay region during a debate over land use, outdoor recreation, and wilderness preservation that led to the 1974 establishment of the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy,

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¹ Resident of Nelson to Robert Williams, Minister of Lands and Forests, 16 November 1972, British Columbia Archives (hereafter BCA), GR-1227, Forest Service – Public Information and Education Division, “Fry Creek (1972-1973).” Names are withheld to protect the privacy of individuals. All further correspondence and petitions cited here from GR-1227 are located in files 2-4, “Fry Creek (1972-1973).”

² Resident of Argenta to Robert Williams, BCA, GR-1227.

³ Petition signed by citizens of Kaslo-Lardeau-Ainsworth to R. Williams, [Kaslo, BC], 27 December 1972, BCA, GR-1227.

one of several large parks and protected areas that the New Democratic Party (NDP) created during its first short term in government.⁴ The quotes represent the perspectives of three interest groups that sought to shape the future of the forested slopes of the Purcell Mountains: (1) long-term Kootenay residents concerned about the dramatic environmental changes produced by logging and dam building since the 1950s, (2) newcomers with urban origins participating in the back-to-the-land movement, and (3) people who depended on the forest industry to maintain their standard of living. Their divergent perspectives on the meaning and value of “wilderness” demonstrate tensions between two different visions of the environment and its place in “the good life” in the early 1970s: while many Kootenay residents argued that natural resource extraction was an economic necessity, a growing number of their neighbours were asserting that untouched nature had ecological value and offered psychological benefits to human visitors. In an effort to better understand the roles that British Columbia’s hinterland residents played in wilderness politics, this article examines the involvement of Kootenay residents in initiating the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy and the regional conflict that ensued over its designation.

Outside forces converging on the Kootenays in the 1960s raised the value of standing forests. New logging techniques and a consolidation of the sawmill industry meant that timber could be cut in previously inaccessible areas and transported longer distances. In 1966, Social Credit minister of forests Ray Williston allowed logging companies to cut smaller trees and buy and sell timber quotas, encouraging investment in advanced mill technology. Part of the modernization of the Interior forest industry was a shift from selective logging to clear-cutting, which had more noticeable environmental and aesthetic impacts.⁵ Hydroelectric dams built as a result of the Columbia River Treaty (1964) also dramatically altered local landscapes, inundating huge areas of low-level land, not all of it cleared. Flooding swallowed up wildlife habitat, reduced fish populations, removed beaches, and made recreational use unpredictable because of changing water levels. Kootenay residents bore the cost of these megaprojects through reductions in logging jobs,

⁴ The NDP also established the following wilderness parks in northern British Columbia: Spatsizi Plateau, Atlin, Kwadacha, and Tatlatui. See Jeremy Wilson, *Talk and Log: Wilderness Politics in British Columbia, 1965–96* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998), 130.

⁵ Katherine Gordon, *The Slocan: Portrait of a Valley* (Winlaw, BC: Sono Nis Press, 2004), 218; Wilson, *Talk and Log*, 22; Ken Drushka, *Tie Hackers to Timber Harvesters: The History of Logging in British Columbia’s Interior* (Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, 1998).

environmental degradation, and displacement of people whose homes and farms were lost in the floods.⁶

The composition of Kootenay society and the values of the region's residents were also changing. As Western societies grew increasingly prosperous following the Second World War, a well-educated middle class began to turn away from materialist values of safety and security to embrace postmaterialist values such as quality of life, environmentalism, and self-expression.⁷ Frank Zelko shows how a rise in postmaterialist values made Vancouver residents more receptive to environmental organizations such as Greenpeace.⁸ Some young urban counterculture Canadians and American draft resisters who valued intangible amenities such as beautiful landscapes, "virgin" forests, and clean air resettled around Kootenay Lake and Slocan Lake in their quest to test out new social values and to live on the land as self-sufficient smallholders.⁹ Back-to-the-landers brought postmaterialist values to the Kootenays, yet these values were also gaining a foothold among more established residents of the region who were suspicious of the hippie newcomers.

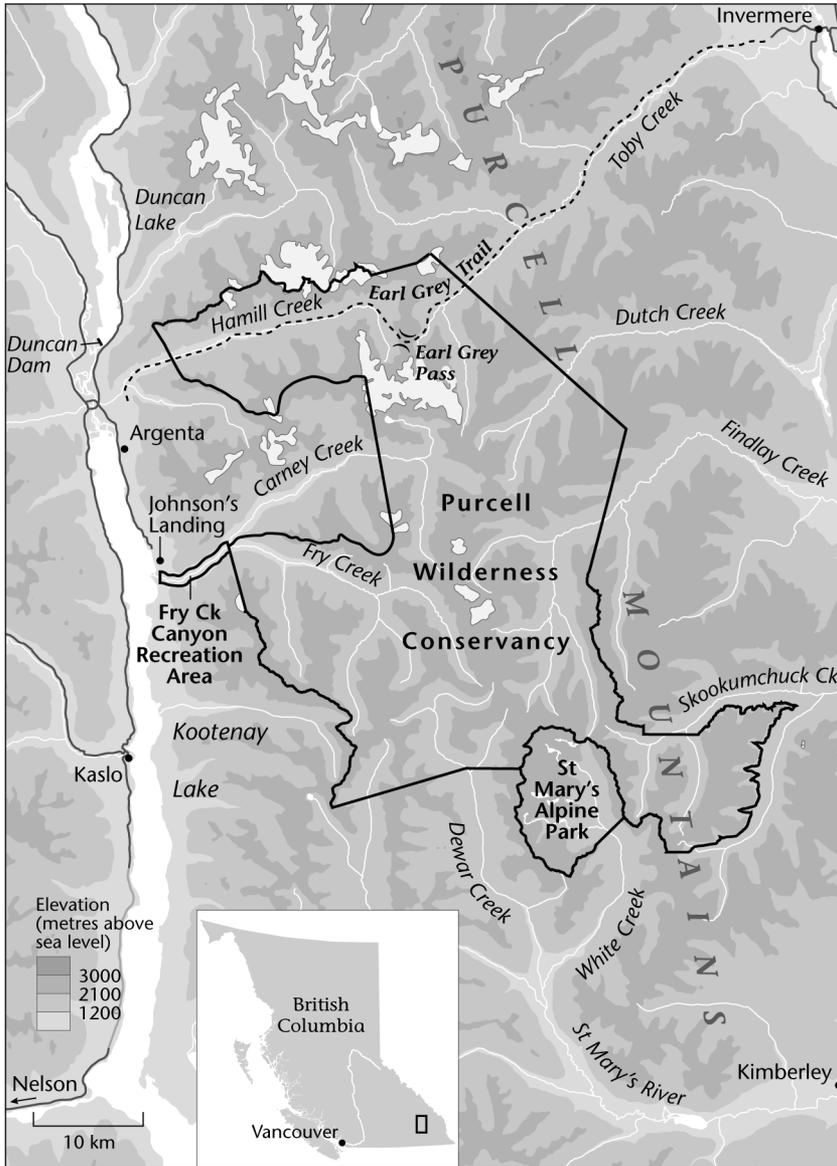
For Kootenay residents disturbed by dams and clear-cut watersheds, the emerging North American environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s provided a forum for expressing their concerns. Environmentalists recognized the importance of ecological interdependence and the dangers of pollution, formed organizations to lobby for new legislation and environmental justice, and changed their personal consumption

⁶ Joy Parr, *Sensing Changes: Technologies, Environments, and the Everyday, 1953-2003* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), chap. 5; J. Douglas Porteous and Sandra E. Smith, *Domicide: The Global Destruction of Home* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), chap. 5; Tina Loo, "People in the Way: Modernity, Environment, and Society on the Arrow Lakes," *BC Studies* 142/43 (2004): 161-196.

⁷ Ronald Inglehart, *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 66-67; Samuel P. Hays with Barbara D. Hays, *Beauty, Health, and Permanence: Environmental Politics in the United States, 1955-1985* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 35.

⁸ Frank Zelko, "Making Greenpeace: The Development of Direct Action Environmentalism in British Columbia," *BC Studies* 142/43 (2004): 197-239.

⁹ Gordon, *The Slocan*, 236-53. On back-to-the-landers in British Columbia, see Nancy Janovicek, "'Slocan Man Meets Beer Can Man': The Back-to-the-Land Alternative Press in the West Kootenays, BC, 1973-1991," presentation to the Canadian Historical Association, Montreal, 28 May-1 June 2010; John Gordon Gower, "The Impact of Alternative Ideology on Landscape: The Back-to-the-Land Movement in the Slocan Valley" (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1990); Terry Allan Simmons, "But We Must Cultivate Our Garden: 20th-Century Pioneering in Rural British Columbia" (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 1979).



The Purcell Wilderness Conservancy and Fry Creek Canyon Recreation Area. Map by Eric Leinberger.

patterns.¹⁰ In British Columbia, as other articles in this issue demonstrate, environmental activists had garnered significant public support.¹¹

The environmental movement enabled Kootenay residents to imagine and defend “wilderness” in new ways. Accelerated road building in North America after the Second World War, including highways, suburbs, and logging roads, helped inspire a new definition of “wilderness” as roadless. Responding to pressure from the Wilderness Society, the United States Congress passed the Wilderness Act in 1964.¹² The creators of the Act envisioned wilderness as a place where humans were visitors not residents, where evidence of industrial activities and machines was removed, and where recreationists could enjoy solitary contemplation of areas shaped by nature alone.¹³ In their opposition to road building in the Purcell Mountains, Kootenay residents defined wilderness in similar ways – as threatened by machines, as having intrinsic value, and as offering psychological benefits to human visitors.¹⁴

THE EARL GREY TRAIL

Efforts to establish a protected area in the Purcell Mountains began when residents of Argenta and Johnson’s Landing, at the north end of Kootenay Lake, proposed to reconstruct a historic trail that followed

¹⁰ Ted Steinberg, *Down to Earth: Nature’s Role in American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), chap. 15. See also Hays, *Beauty, Health, and Permanence*, 263–265.

¹¹ See for example Wilson, *Talk and Log*, 100–3; Arn Keeling and Robert McDonald, “The Profligate Province: Roderick Haig-Brown and the Modernizing of British Columbia,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 36(3) 2001: 7–23; Arn Keeling, “A Dynamic, Not a Static Conception: The Conservation Thought of Roderick Haig-Brown,” *Pacific Historical Review* 71(2) 2002: 239–68; Ric Careless, *To Save the Wild Earth: Field Notes from the Environmental Frontline* (Vancouver: Raincoast Books, 1997); Zelko, “Making Greenpeace.”

¹² Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, 243. See also David Louter, *Windshield Wilderness: Cars, Roads, and Nature in Washington’s National Parks* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006); Hal K. Rothman, *The Greening of a Nation? Environmentalism in the United States since 1945* (Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace, 1998); Paul Sutter, *Driven Wild: How the Fight against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002); Adam Rome, “Give Earth a Chance: The Environmental Movement and the 1960s,” *Journal of American History* 92 (2003): 525–54.

¹³ Wilderness Act, 1964.

¹⁴ In proposing and designating the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy, Kootenay residents and environmental activist Ric Careless, working for the provincial government’s Environment and Land Use Committee, drew on definitions of wilderness found in the American *Wilderness Act*. Earthwatch Conference II, “Proposals for Wilderness Legislation and Wilderness Areas in Southeastern British Columbia,” Golden, BC, 4–5 November 1972, 4. A copy of this twelve-page report is available in UBC Archives, Alan Chambers Fonds, A.1.5; Careless, *To Save the Wild Earth*, chap. 3. Earthwatch Conference II. Like other parks and protected areas, the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy reflected the era in which it was created. See Alan MacEachern, *Natural Selections: National Parks in Atlantic Canada, 1935–1970* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001), 6.

Hamill Creek up to the Earl Grey Pass. This ambitious plan to clear and mark a forty-five-kilometre trail was initially intended to promote tourism and to forestall logging in the Hamill Creek watershed, but it became the catalyst of a larger wilderness preservation project.¹⁵ Argenta had begun as a silver-mining centre in the 1890s, but by the 1950s it was a small agricultural settlement with affordable land that attracted a handful of Quaker families from California who rejected the McCarthyism, militarism, and materialism of the postwar United States. In 1954, Quaker families and other Argenta residents formed the Delta Land Co-operative, in which they farmed together, pooling and redistributing part of the income that members earned from working off-farm in teaching, logging, and construction. Local Quakers also started a printing press and, since many of the adults were educators, established the Argenta Friends School in 1959, a boarding school for high school students and based on democratic principles. Quakers, draft resisters, and members of the counterculture continued to move to the Argenta area, but Argenta and Johnson's Landing remained very small communities, with a combined population of just 125 in 1969.¹⁶ According to Hugh Herbison, who moved to Argenta with his family in 1961, most of the area's recently arrived residents "pursued an intentional rural life with the ideals of respecting the environment and their neighbours and providing the best possible place for their families."¹⁷

The completion of the Duncan Dam in 1967 opened new territory around Kootenay Lake to logging, and the subsequent construction of logging roads up lakeside creeks and streams raised local fears that the Hamill Creek valley would soon be logged. In November 1969 the Argenta-Johnson's Landing Centennial Committee proposed to rebuild the old "Earl Grey Trail" in an attempt to keep the Hamill Creek watershed in a relatively untouched natural state and to boost tourism by highlighting its historic and recreational features. In its proposal, the committee indicated that the trail was intended to commemorate the actions of pioneers and to provide a healthy retreat for modern

¹⁵ The group rebuilt the trail from the western trailhead at Argenta to the Earl Grey Pass. Rik Valentine, personal interview, Argenta, BC, 2 May 2007; BC Parks, Earl Grey Pass Trail Map, available at http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/purcell/earl_grey_trail_map.pdf (accessed 5 June 2011).

¹⁶ "The Delta Co-op of Argenta: Memory, Quakerism, and Co-operative Studies in British Columbia during the 1950s," in *Galleria: Stories of the BC Co-op Movement*, available at <http://bcics.uvic.ca/galleria/bc.php?group=15&tourtype=1&story=24> (accessed 30 December 2008); Andrew Scott, *The Promise of Paradise: Utopian Communities in BC* (Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 1997), 162-63. See also Arthur Garratt Dorland, *The Quakers in Canada: A History* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1968).

¹⁷ Hugh Herbison, quoted in Scott, *Promise of Paradise*, 166.

tourists.¹⁸ The local centennial committee sought to protect the trail “by a long-term lease, and in due course, a declaration defining it as a Historical Site or Provincial Park,” and to secure the valley “before it [was] lost forever through logging or other exploitation.”¹⁹

The Earl Grey Trail had first appeared in the written record as a route taken in the mid-nineteenth century by Shuswap people led by Paul Ignatius Kinbasket from Adams Lake through Sinixt territory, across the Purcell Mountains, and into Ktunaxa territory, where they settled near present-day Lake Windermere.²⁰ Crossing the mountains from the north end of Kootenay Lake, the trail followed Hamill Creek up the west side of the Purcell Mountains, climbing through hemlock rainforests, spruce forests, and alpine meadows at Earl Grey Pass, before descending eastward along Toby Creek, through drier Douglas fir forests to the site of present-day Windermere in the upper Columbia River Valley.²¹

During the 1890s, prospectors and cattle drivers followed the same trail from Windermere to the silver mines around Argenta.²² In the early twentieth century, this route through the mountains caught the attention of the fourth Earl Grey, governor general of Canada, as a potential scenic tourist trail. In 1908, prior to the establishment of provincial parks in British Columbia, Earl Grey urged BC premier Richard McBride to

¹⁸ Hugh Herbison, Chairman, Centennial Project: The Historic and Beautiful Earl Grey Pass Trail between Argenta and Windermere, BCA, GR-1450, BC Centennial '71 Committee, box 30, Argenta-Johnson's Landing. According to one trail builder, residents had seen “what was happening with the West Coast Trail, and [thought they] could use this in the Kootenays.” David Polster, personal interview, 14 June 2007, Victoria, BC; David Foster and Wayne Aitken, *Blisters and Bliss: A Trekker's Guide to the West Coast Trail* 5th Ed. (Surrey, BC: Heritage House, 2003), 10.

¹⁹ Mrs. Betty Polster, Secretary, Argenta-Johnson's Landing Centennial Committee, to Mr. L.J. Wallace, General Chairman, BC Centennial '71 Committee, 25 November 1970, BCA, GR-1450, box 30, Argenta-Johnson's Landing.

²⁰ On the Sinixt, see Paula Pryce, “*Keeping the Lakes' Way: Reburial and the Re-Creation of a Moral World among an Invisible People* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999). On Kinbasket, see Hugh A. Dempsey, *Indians of the Rocky Mountain Parks* (Calgary: Fifth House, 1998), 67.

²¹ Trail builders focused their efforts on re-opening the west side of the trail. See Citizens of Argenta and Johnson's Landing, “A Brief Presented to the Ecological Reserves Committee of British Columbia by the Residents of Argenta-Johnson's Landing, B.C., Supporting the Setting Aside of the Hamill Creek Valley as an Ecological Reserve under the Ecological Reserves Act of British Columbia,” in Bruce Fraser and Brenda Herbison, “Application for Ecological Reserve, Report No. 66,” in Wood, Terry F. *A Summary of Ecological Reserves and Ecological Reserve Proposals in the Nelson Forest Region* (Victoria: Ministry of Forests, Research Branch, 1983). “Purcell Wilderness Conservancy Provincial Park,” Great Wild Spaces (sponsored by BC Spaces for Nature), available at <http://www.spacesfornature.org/greatspaces/purcell.html#wildlife> (accessed 30 December 2008).

²² Willard Ireland, Provincial Archivist, Victoria, to Hugh Herbison, Argenta, BC, 17 December 1970, BCA, GR-1738, Provincial Archives Correspondence, 1909-1979, box 70, file 9 (Herbison, Hugh); Leo Gansner, Nelson, BC, to W.D. Black, Member of the Executive Council, 11 December 1970, BCA, GR-1450, box 30, Argenta-Johnson's Landing.

have the area designated a national park. He described the route through the Purcells as “a continuous and delightful surprise” and noted the impressive cedar forests near Argenta. For accommodation, he proposed the construction of a “log chalet, four miles on each side of the summit, for cooking and dining, surrounded by a number of single and two-bed huts and tepees.” He also recommended increasing the bird population and ensuring that tourists saw bears and deer.²³ The governor general had a cabin built for his family’s use on Toby Creek, and the publicity he generated attracted sport hunters and mountaineers.²⁴ Guide outfitters regularly operated on the eastern side of the pass, keeping the “Earl Grey” trail open for hunting and horse-riding parties. However, the rainforest climate and frequent avalanches obstructed the western section of the trail, and it was overgrown by the 1930s.²⁵

Some thirty years later, the trail builders took advantage of provincial and federal funding intended to promote self-improvement and community celebration to gain a measure of control over local resource management. They first applied to rebuild the trail as a BC centennial project.²⁶ In addition to the relatively minor provincial funding of \$2.60 per capita for the 125 residents of Argenta and Johnson’s Landing, a much larger grant of \$10,600 was received from the federal government through its Opportunities for Youth (OFY) program.²⁷ Operating from 1971 to 1975, this job creation program was part of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau’s proactive and inclusive approach to social movements, meant to encourage citizen participation, integrate youth, and promote a “Just Society” that would be upheld by participatory democracy.²⁸

²³ Earl Grey, “Earl Grey’s Visit to British Columbia,” BC Sessional Papers, 11th Parliament, 3rd Session, 1909, G28. On wildlife management in parks, see Alan MacEachern, “Rationality and Rationalization in Canadian National Parks’ Predator Policy,” *Canadian Papers in Rural History* 10 (1996): 149–64.

²⁴ See, for example, an article by Alpine Club of Canada co-founder Elizabeth Parker, “The Upper Columbia,” *Canadian Alpine Journal* vol. 5 (1911): 147–56.

²⁵ Leo Gansner to W.D. Black, 11 December 1970, Leo Gansner to L.J. Wallace, 16 March 1971, BCA, GR-1450, box 30, Argenta-Johnson’s Landing; Willard Ireland to Hugh Herbison, 17 December 1970, BCA, GR-1738, box 70, file 9. Pat Bavin, Don Wah, Rich Mazzocchi, David Polster, and Alan Polster, *Earl Grey Pass Project, Report of an Opportunities for Youth Project* (Castlegar, BC: Opportunities for Youth, 1973), 68.

²⁶ BCA, GR-1450, box 30, Argenta-Johnson’s Landing. British Columbia Centennial ’71 Committee, *The Celebration of the Century: 1871-1971. The Report of the British Columbia Centennial ’71 Committee* (Victoria: Government of British Columbia, 1973). See also Mia Reimers, “‘BC at Its Most Sparkling, Colourful Best’: Post-War Province Building through Centennial Celebrations” (PhD diss., University of Victoria, 2007).

²⁷ “Local Project Aided by Government Grant,” *Pine Knots: A Monthly Publication of the Argenta-Johnson’s Landing Recreation Commission*, 18 June 1971, Kaslo Archives.

²⁸ See Leslie Pal, *Interests of State: The Politics of Language, Multiculturalism, and Feminism in Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993), 109; Dominique

Federal government funding helped reconstruction of the Earl Grey Trail, but the province controlled the land and resources along the route. To achieve their goals of establishing a historic site or provincial park, trail planners and supporters enlisted the aid of area MLAs.²⁹ According to Burt Campbell, the Social Credit MLA for Revelstoke-Slocan, the local committee had “done its homework well in that it ha[d] already initiated discussions with various government departments and local logging companies, including Kootenay Forest Products.”³⁰ However, the BC Forest Service was unwilling to alter its plans to create a forest reserve in the valley, which would allow logging operations. As Assistant Chief Forester Ian Cameron explained to Centennial Committee chair Laurie J. Wallace, the trail would be included in a forest reserve and did not warrant additional protection. The Forest Service would encourage logging companies to cut around the trail but could not rule out road construction in the valley.³¹ Despite being unable to achieve “security of tenure” over the trail route, the chair of the Argenta-Johnson’s Landing Centennial Committee, Hugh Herbison, insisted that “the local community [was] going to go ahead and re-open the trail.”³²

Community leaders applied for funding, but it was local youth, for whom hiking was one of the few available leisure options, who provided the design and the labour. They marked out the trail in 1970 and constructed it over the following two summers.³³ The new trail was a loose

Clément, *Canada’s Rights Revolution: Social Movements and Social Change, 1937–82* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008); Alan Clarke, “CYC, OFY, LIP et al...” *Journal of Architectural Education* 29, 3 (1976): 29; Jim Coutts, “Expansion, Retrenchment and Protecting the Future: Social Policy in the Trudeau Years,” in *Towards a Just Society: The Trudeau Years*, ed. Thomas S. Axworthy and Pierre Elliott Trudeau (Markham, ON: Viking, 1990), 192.

²⁹ Betty Polster, Secretary, Argenta-Johnson’s Landing Centennial Committee, to L.J. Wallace, 25 November 1970, BCA, GR-1450, box 30, Argenta-Johnson’s Landing.

³⁰ Burt Campbell, MLA, Revelstoke-Slocan, to L.J. Wallace, 26 November 1970, BCA, GR-1450, box 30, Argenta-Johnson’s Landing.

³¹ L.J. Wallace to W.D. Black, Provincial Secretary and Minister of Highways, 31 December 1970, Ian Cameron, Assistant Chief Forester to L.J. Wallace, 30 March 1971, W.R. Redel, Director of Lands, Department of Lands, Forests and Water Resources, to L.J. Wallace, 15 December 1970, Argenta-Johnson’s Landing, BCA, GR-1450, box 30. According to L. Brooks in 1953, the primary role of forest reserves was for growing timber, but they were also open to “forms of recreation which are not ordinarily permissible in the parks. This includes summer home sites and hunting grounds.” In some forest reserves, the Forest Service developed picnic and camping sites. See L. Brooks (Parks and Recreation Division, BC Forest Service), “Recent Recreational Development in BC,” in *Transactions of the Sixth British Columbia Natural Resources Conference* (Victoria: The British Columbia Natural Resources Conference, 1953), 140. See also Assistant Chief Forester, i/c Operations, to W.R. Redel, Director of Lands, 8 February 1971, BCA, GR-1450, box 30, Argenta-Johnson’s Landing.

³² Herbison to Wallace, 6 April 1971, BCA, GR-1450, box 30, Argenta-Johnson’s Landing.

³³ Earl Grey Pass Project, *Hiker’s Guide to the Earl Grey Trail* (Argenta, BC: Root Cellar Press, 1972); Rik Valentine, personal interview. Federal funding allowed the trail building group

interpretation of Earl Grey's. Trail builders tried to maintain the same route wherever they found corduroy logs, cut stumps, and old blazes, but there was no single historic trail that could be rebuilt as the old trail had been obscured or obstructed in places and had "switched sides from year to year."³⁴ The original trail had been meant for horses, which could ford Hamill Creek at various points, and thus did not need bridges. To minimize construction of bridges and cable crossings, the new trail did not cross the creek as frequently as has past ones had.³⁵ In 1971, after a crew of ten youth had built shelters and cleared about thirty-five kilometres of the trail to within about ten kilometres of established trails to Invermere, a forest fire obliterated much of their summer's work. That section of the trail was then diverted to the south side of the creek.³⁶

A new leave-no-trace wilderness ethic distinguished the new trail from its predecessor. According to historian James Morton Turner, this ethic gained popularity when wilderness areas came under pressure from increasing numbers of visitors and replaced an earlier woodcraft movement, in which recreationists used materials on hand to make bedding, fires, and shelter. The "leave-no-trace" ethic fit well with the 1964 American Wilderness Act's exclusion of commercial and industrial activities that might modify the landscape, and it provided a striking contrast to Earl Grey's recommendations for accommodations and wildlife management. As Turner explains, "leave-no-trace" camping served to separate labour from leisure and production from consumption as hikers brought in all their equipment, which was manufactured elsewhere.³⁷ When Selkirk College students, who studied the feasibility of the Earl Grey Pass as an alpine park under a separate OFY grant, published an eight-page booklet entitled *A Hiker's Guide to the Earl Grey Trail*, they instructed campers not to leave food or garbage behind because these attracted bears, to dig and bury latrines away from campsites and water sources, and to take a propane stove instead of building a fire because it was "safer, cleaner, and [did] not denude the forest."³⁸ Possibly to reduce

to hire youth for summer employment from Argenta (9), Johnson's Landing (3), Kaslo (3), Lardeau (1), Cooper Creek (1), Victoria (1), and Calgary (1). See "Local Project Aided by Government Grant," *Pine Knots*, 18 June 1971, Kaslo Archives.

³⁴ David Polster, personal interview.

³⁵ Rik Valentine, personal interview.

³⁶ "Summer Project Clears Historic Trail," *Pine Knots*, 21 September 1971, 2, Kaslo Archives.

³⁷ Turner points out that the transition to "leave-no-trace" camping shifted the impact of consumption from the local forest to distant factories, where equipment was produced. It was in these locations that wilderness recreation did leave traces. See James Morton Turner, "From Woodcraft to 'Leave No Trace': Wilderness, Consumerism, and Environmentalism in Twentieth-Century America," *Environmental History* 7, 3 (2002): 462-84.

³⁸ David Polster, personal interview. See also Earl Grey Pass Project, *Hiker's Guide*.

costs and to minimize the trail's impact, trail builders cut fewer trees than some hikers thought was necessary for a passable trail, leading surveyor Gordon Stein to warn that "the only thing that Hamill Creek has to offer is a great deal of exercise" on a meandering route.³⁹

In addition to building the trail, area residents also tried to protect Hamill Creek with emerging environmental legislation. In 1968, under the leadership of UBC botany professor Vladimir Krajina, BC scientists and civil servants had formed the Ecological Reserves Committee to study and protect the province's diverse ecosystems.⁴⁰ In February 1971 this committee agreed to fund a survey of the Hamill Creek area in response to a request from the Argenta-Johnson's Landing Centennial Committee and Brenda Herbison of Argenta, who had helped locate the route of the Earl Grey Trail.⁴¹ Two months later, the provincial government passed the Ecological Reserves Act and created the Environment and Land Use Committee (ELUC), which would integrate environmental standards across ministries and ensure that environmental protection was considered in resource development decisions. The minister of lands and first chair of ELUC, Ray Williston, claimed that the government wanted to increase public concern for the environment with these initiatives. Opposition parties, however, suggested that the Social Credit government introduced the bill as a salve to its environmental critics.⁴²

In the Kootenays as elsewhere, students and professors at growing postsecondary institutions provided crucial support for environmental initiatives.⁴³ Brenda Herbison, a biology student at the recently established Selkirk College in Castlegar, and Bruce Fraser, a biology instructor there, surveyed the topography, biogeoclimatic zone, and flora and fauna of the Hamill Creek watershed and submitted an ecological reserve application in October 1971.⁴⁴ A group of Argenta-Johnson's Landing residents added a brief to the application, claiming that they would be

³⁹ Gordon Stein, "Earl Grey Pass Access," *Kootenay Karabiner* 15 (1972): 37-38, Nelson Archives.

⁴⁰ "Ecological Reserves," *BC Parks*, Ministry of the Environment, available at http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/eco_reserve/ (accessed 29 June 2011); V.J. Krajina et al., *Ecological Reserves in British Columbia*, 2nd ed. (Victoria: Ecological Reserves Unit, Ministry of the Environment, 1978).

⁴¹ Gladys McLeod, ed. *Hamill's Last Stand* (Castlegar, BC: Co Tinneh Books, 1972), 2.

⁴² "Land Pledge Kept by BC," *Victoria Colonist*, 18 March 1971; "Environmental Committee, Ecology Reserves on Way," *Vancouver Sun*, 18 March 1971; Eileen Williston and Betty Keller, *Forests, Power and Policy: The Legacy of Ray Williston* (Prince George, BC: Caitlin Press, 1997), 245; Wilson, *Talk and Log*, 107-8; Debates reported in the *Victoria Daily Times*, March 1971.

⁴³ Rome, "Give Earth a Chance"; Jennifer Read, "'Let Us Heed the Voice of Youth': Laundry Detergents, Phosphates and the Emergence of the Environmental Movement in Ontario," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 7 (1996): 227-50.

⁴⁴ Selkirk College was established in 1966. McLeod, *Hamill's Last Stand*; Krajina et al., *Ecological Reserves*, 20.

particularly suitable stewards of an ecological reserve, partly because of their own high levels of education. The brief claimed that there was “probably no rural community in BC that would be more sympathetic to programmes of ecological study than Argenta-Johnson’s Landing” since three-quarters of the adults had “university degrees in fields such as biology, engineering, hydrology, sociology, applied science, agriculture, ornithology, forestry, and many degrees in education.”⁴⁵

Proponents of an ecological reserve had to address a variety of local perspectives and interests. The brief suggested that older and newer residents of the communities could contribute different, but complementary, understandings of the land: “Our old-time residents have extensive knowledge of the area through trapping, hunting, fishing, mining, guiding and logging. Newer residents who have taken up land during the past twenty years are dedicated to the idea of living in harmony with nature.”⁴⁶ Not everyone in Argenta and Johnson’s Landing supported the idea of an ecological reserve, however. Bruce Fraser tried to address this difference of opinion by chairing a meeting in Argenta intended to “work through confusion, [and] differences of opinion toward a better understanding” of the reserve application.⁴⁷

To the disappointment of Argenta and Johnson’s Landing residents who had hoped for an ecological reserve, ELUC rejected the Hamill Creek application in February 1972, citing conflicts with mineral claims, the amount of valuable mature timber in the area, and, ironically, the “enthusiasm of the local people,” which suggested that “park status rather than an ecological reserve might well be considered to serve local needs.”⁴⁸ That the government did not seriously consider park status for Hamill Creek was evident less than three weeks later when the Forest Service offered 7 million cubic feet (almost 200,000 cubic metres) of timber in the watershed for sale. Disappointed Selkirk College students wrote a poetry and protest book, *Hamill’s Last Stand*, outlining the chronology of events involving Hamill Creek, what the creek meant to them, and how the provincial government had put it up for sale.⁴⁹ The timber sale appeared to be the end of preservation efforts at Hamill Creek. Yet a local attempt to redefine the Hamill watershed as a place best left alone

⁴⁵ Citizens of Argenta and Johnson’s Landing, “A Brief Presented to the Ecological Reserves Committee of British Columbia.”

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ “Ecological Reserve in Hamill Creek?” *Pine Knots*, November–December 1971, Kaslo Archives.

⁴⁸ Letter from D. Borthwick, Deputy Minister, Department of Lands, Forests, and Water Resources, to Dr. V.J. Krajina, Professor of Botany, UBC, cc. Dr. B. Fraser, Selkirk College, Castlegar, BC, February 28, 1972, cited in McLeod, *Hamill’s Last Stand*.

⁴⁹ *Nelson Daily News*, 16 March 1972, cited in McLeod, *Hamill’s Last Stand*.

helped to propel a broader regional campaign to stop the construction of a logging road up the Fry Creek Canyon, located south of Argenta and adjacent to Johnson's Landing. Some of the same individuals were active in this second project, which had a very different outcome and changed the fate of the Earl Grey Trail.

FRY CREEK CANYON

The 1972 provincial election campaign signalled a growing political receptiveness to environmentalists' critiques of "business as usual" in land-use and resource management policy. Responding to popular regional demand and sensing that Social Credit was vulnerable due to its lack of commitment to environmental reform, the Liberal, Progressive Conservative, and NDP candidates in the West Kootenays all highlighted environmental programs in their election platforms.⁵⁰ On 30 August, British Columbians gave the NDP a majority, and NDP MLAs were elected in four of five Kootenay ridings.⁵¹ Dave Barrett's government proved to be more open than its predecessor to environmental reform and to creating large new parks. Barrett made Bob Williams his minister responsible for the Department of Lands, Forests and Water Resources as well as the Department of Recreation and Conservation. Williams was suspicious of the cozy ties between the Forest Service and large forestry companies, and he was also determined to increase funding for fish and wildlife, and for parks, which had long been treated as second-class agencies. He quickly moved to strengthen the nascent Environment and Land Use Committee by providing it with a secretariat, or staff support, which would coordinate different land-use ministries.⁵²

A new government inspired environmentalists in the Kootenays and elsewhere in British Columbia to seek park status for a variety of areas.⁵³

⁵⁰ Leo Nimsick (NDP) promoted parks, recreation, and conservation of fish and wildlife to improve the economy and quality of life of the East Kootenays. See *Nelson Daily News*, 15 August 1972. The Liberal candidate for Nelson-Creston advocated a department of the environment and legislation to ban logging from streamsides, while the Progressive Conservative candidate promised a provincial department of pollution control. See *Nelson Daily News*, 23 August 1972. Meanwhile, the Social Credit government's advertisement warned British Columbians "Don't Turn Left," showing the left option as a gravel road in the woods and the right option as a brand new highway. See *Nelson Daily News* 15 August 1972.

⁵¹ This reversed the results of the 1969 election in the Kootenay region. NDP MLAs were elected in Nelson-Creston, Revelstoke-Slocan, Kootenay, and Rossland-Trail. Social Credit MLA James Roland Chabot held his seat in the Columbia River riding. See Elections British Columbia, *Electoral History of British Columbia, 1871-1986* (Victoria: Queen's Printer, 1988), 311-29.

⁵² Williams held the second portfolio until Jack Radford was appointed in mid-1973. See Wilson, *Talk and Log*, 117-19, 129.

⁵³ Wilson, *Talk and Log*, 131.

An Earthwatch conference organized by environmental activists and biologists took place in Golden on 4 and 5 November 1972. The conference called for British Columbia to pass its own wilderness act, to designate wilderness areas, and to place a moratorium on industry activities in these areas until thorough regional planning was undertaken. Following the American Wilderness Act, the group defined a wilderness area as “an area where natural conditions are preserved undisturbed without mechanical, industrial or other discordant human influence and where man is only a transient visitor.”⁵⁴ The group agreed that wilderness areas should be protected both for their intrinsic value – preservation of flora, fauna, water, and ecological systems – and for the ways they benefited humans by offering “spiritual and physical regeneration,” education, recreation, hunting, and fishing. The sixty-five participants were mostly based in the East Kootenays but some came from Banff and Yoho national parks, Salmon Arm, Nelson, Trail, and Courtenay. Five individuals, including Brenda Herbison and Rik Valentine, who helped build the Earl Grey Trail, came from Argenta. Participants mapped out eleven areas that they thought should be protected in the East Kootenays, including the Purcell Mountains between St. Mary’s headwaters and the Earl Grey Pass.⁵⁵ This area included the Fry and Carney watersheds to which the Forest Service had sold timber licences early in 1972, permitting T. and H. Holdings of Kaslo and Crestbrook Forest Industries of Creston to cut 140 million cubic feet (almost four million cubic metres) of timber. To gain access to this timber, a road would have to be built up Fry Creek. Surveys had already been conducted, but two members of the Fish and Wildlife Branch who attended the Earthwatch conference indicated that their branch was keeping an eye on the canyon and was prepared to “stop destructive action.”⁵⁶

Fry Creek Canyon was one of the few unlogged watersheds draining into Kootenay Lake, and the old trappers’ and prospectors’ trails that hugged the side of the narrow canyon had become popular with regional recreationists (see Photo 1).⁵⁷ In mid-November, the Nelson branch of

⁵⁴ Participants of the Earthwatch Conference intended that BC’s Wilderness Act would be “stronger than that in the U.S. in its total exclusion of the extractive industries.” Earthwatch Conference II, “Proposals for Wilderness Legislation and Wilderness Areas in Southeastern British Columbia,” 2, 4.

⁵⁵ Five of these areas, or at least sections of them, have since been protected by the provincial government as Top of the World Provincial Park (1973), Elk Lakes Provincial Park (1973), the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy (1974), Akamina-Kishenina Provincial Park (1986), and Kianuko Provincial Park (1995). See also Careless, *To Save the Wild Earth*, 50–52.

⁵⁶ Earthwatch Conference II, “Proposals for Wilderness Legislation,” 11.

⁵⁷ For information on trappers and prospectors, see “Fry Creek,” *BC Geographical Names*, available at <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcgn-bin/bcgn10?name=4480> (accessed 30 December 2008); “Fry

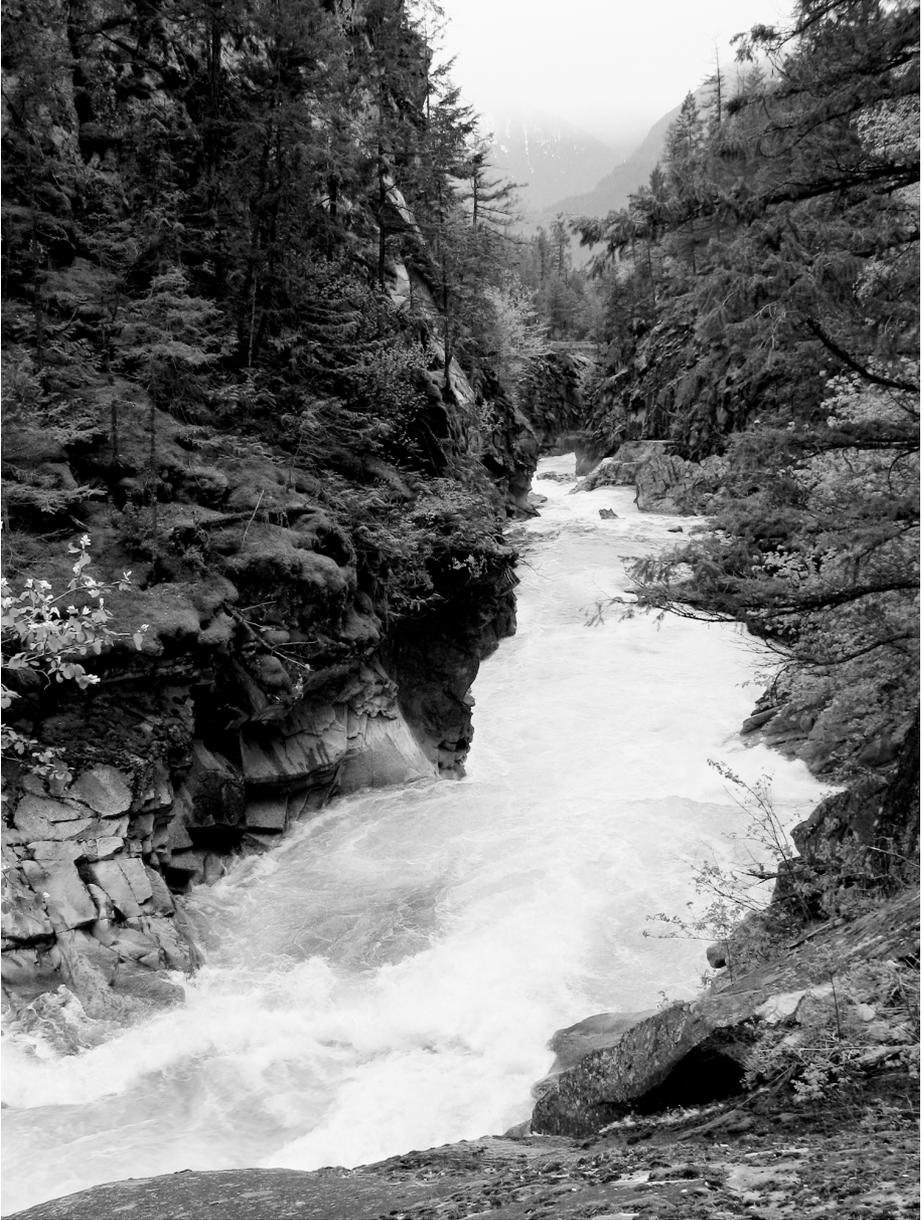


Photo 1. Fry Creek Canyon near Kootenay Lake. Photograph by Christian Lieb, 2007.

the Scientific Pollution and Environmental Control Society (SPEC), the Trail Wildlife Association (TWA), and the Unitarian Church organized a public meeting in Nelson, calling for a “Purcell Mountains wilderness area.” Representatives of the BC Forest Service and the Fish and Wildlife Branch were invited to give presentations.⁵⁸ Like other fish and game clubs and naturalist groups, the TWA included environmental protection as a part of its mandate. The Nelson branch of SPEC was an offshoot of the group formed in Vancouver in 1969 to combat pollution in the Lower Mainland and strip-mining in the Kootenays. The Unitarian Church, which had operated a camp since 1966 on its property at the mouth of Fry Creek, was based in Vancouver. These groups would have known they had an ally in the Fish and Wildlife Branch from the Earthwatch conference earlier that month. The Nelson meeting publicized an internal rift between two of the portfolios held by Minister of Lands Bob Williams. At the meeting, Harvey Andrusak of the Fish and Wildlife Branch revealed that his branch had recommended against building “a road through this beautiful area” after seeing how logging on other Kootenay Lake streams had damaged fish and wildlife habitat – a recommendation that halted cooperation between fish and wildlife and the forest service on this issue.⁵⁹

Residents of Trail, a nearby blue-collar smelter town with a population of 11,149 in 1971, drew on both older traditions of sports-hunter access to wilderness and newer postmaterialist values in the thirty-nine letters they wrote to oppose the road and to support a protected area for outdoor recreation. The *Trail Daily Times* suggested in an editorial that Kootenay residents had the right to an opinion based on longstanding

Creek Canyon and Birchdale Trails,” *BC Parks*, available at http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/purcell/fry_creek_trail_brochure.pdf (accessed 30 December 2008).

⁵⁸ Brian Freemantle, “Creek Preservation Is Peoples’ Wish,” *Daily News* (Nelson), 17 November 1972.

⁵⁹ Freemantle, “Creek Preservation;” Martin A. Keeley, “Kootenay Diary,” *British Columbia Lumberman*, July 1974: 30–34. On creekside logging in the early 1970s, see Richard A. Rajala, “Forests and Fish: The 1972 Coast Logging Guidelines and British Columbia’s First NDP Government,” *BC Studies* 159 (Autumn 2008): 81–120. Keeling shows how the BC Wildlife Federation and SPEC were involved in anti-pollution campaigns in resource-based communities at this time. See Arn M. Keeling, “The Effluent Society: Water Pollution and Environmental Politics in British Columbia, 1889–1980,” (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 2004), 273–322; Wilson, *Talk and Log*, 98–100; John Gordon Terpenning, “The BC Wildlife Federation and Government: A Comparative Study of Pressure Group and Government Interaction for Two Periods, 1947–1957, and 1958–1975” (MA thesis, University of Victoria, 1982). According to Zelko, the Unitarian Church in Vancouver had lobbied against development and pollution in 1970, when it teamed up with the BC Sierra Club, SPEC, and other groups for the Festival of Survival at Stanley Park. See Zelko, “Making Greenpeace,” 226; Wilson, *Talk and Log*, 118–19.

use and enjoyment of Fry Creek.⁶⁰ The TWA, which had a membership of 320 in 1973,⁶¹ defined itself as a conservation organization “concerned with wildlife in the broadest sense, as a resource and as an integral part of British Columbia life.”⁶² At the public meeting in Nelson, Derek Willans, the TWA representative, described Fry Creek as “too wonderful to be convenient, too beautiful to be useful and ... more to be admired than to be used.”⁶³ The TWA also promoted compromise and informed public input, allowing representatives of Crestbrook Forest Industries to give a presentation at its annual meeting and keeping a count of the 417 hikers going over the Fry Creek trail in the summer of 1973.⁶⁴

Before and after the public meeting in Nelson, the minister of lands received 178 letters opposing the construction of the Fry Creek road, stating that the canyon was valuable for outdoor recreation and that natural areas needed to be preserved around Kootenay Lake.⁶⁵ Together, these letters urged a public inquiry into how this watershed should best be managed. In early December, Williams responded by placing a moratorium on logging in the Fry and Carney drainages until a resource-use study could be completed. The reaction from those who saw their livelihoods threatened was immediate. In December 1972 and January 1973, Williams received nineteen letters and nine petitions containing 410 signatures from Kootenay residents who favoured logging of the Fry and Carney creek forests.

Letter writers who opposed industrial development identified themselves as citizens and immigrants, taxpayers, and local landowners. They included men and women, teachers, physicians, engineers, tourism promoters, outdoor enthusiasts, conservationists, young people, and

⁶⁰ In two articles by Ron Kerr, the *Times* outdoor editor, who wrote on topics related to hunting and fishing, the *Trail Daily Times* announced the Nelson public meeting and reported in detail on its proceedings. See “Future Bleak,” *Trail Daily Times*, 13 November 1972; *Trail Daily Times*, 21 and 22 November 1972.

⁶¹ *Telescope: The Monthly Bulletin of the Trail Wildlife Association*, May 1973.

⁶² *Telescope*, September 1972. Prior to the provincial election, the TWA asked local candidates to clarify their views on “land use, natural resource management, outdoor recreation, the natural environment and environmental quality generally” and printed the responses in the organization’s newsletter, the *Telescope* (July–August 1972, 2). The Nelson District Forest Service was also interested in the activities and opinions of the TWA and subscribed to its monthly newsletter. BCA, GR-1119, Nelson Forest Region operational records, 1922–1981, Box 4, File 25, Fish and Wildlife Branch, 1973.

⁶³ *Trail Daily Times*, 21 and 22 November 1972.

⁶⁴ An editorial stated that “the retention of the Kootenays as one huge wilderness area is just as illogical as chopping down all the trees.” See *Telescope*, January 1973. See also *Telescope*, March 1973 and October 1973.

⁶⁵ BCA, GR-1227, Files 2-4, “Fry Creek (1972–1973).”

seniors with deep roots in the West Kootenays.⁶⁶ Some worked for construction companies, the Forest Service, or the logging industry. One Johnson's Landing resident said: "I would hate to see this particular area logged, even though I make my living from construction work and logging. The effect of logging on wildlife is never good, and back there is one of the last really untouched areas in BC."⁶⁷

Many letter writers complained about recent dam building and clear-cut logging in the Kootenays and asked the new NDP government to distinguish itself from its Social Credit predecessor and make an exception for Fry Creek.⁶⁸ A Nelson resident observed with "disgust, alarm, and sadness too, ... the wholesale destruction both throughout the woods area and the creeks from boulders, debris, smashed down trees as well as sluffing into creekbeds from the roads."⁶⁹ The massive dam-building projects associated with the Columbia River Treaty struck some local residents as wasteful and destructive, and several writers argued that logging in the valley that would be flooded by the Mica Dam would more than make up for the volume of logs to which a road into Fry Creek would give access.⁷⁰ Writers asked the new government to manage resources differently by creating parks even in areas that had valuable timber. As a Vancouver resident who had hiked near Nelson put it: "I hope your government, unlike its predecessor, will see fit to stop the sellout of any potential park area merely for a short term gain on timber sales."⁷¹ Some writers who claimed to have voted for the NDP or volunteered for its campaigns urged the new government to keep its environmental commitments. For example, a form letter used by at least seventy-two writers (to which personal sentiments had been added in fifty-three instances) requested a public inquiry based on the NDP's commitment to "require total environmental impact evaluation of new

⁶⁶ Several teachers wrote in, including high school and university biology teachers and the principal of the Procter elementary school. Individuals and organizations who may have wanted to safeguard some of the area's beauty for tourism included the mayor of Trail, the Trail Chamber of Commerce, the Nelson City Council, and Kokanee Travel Ltd. Writers frequently stated that they had lived in the area for a long time.

⁶⁷ Johnson's Landing, 18 November 1972, BCA, GR-1227.

⁶⁸ Jeremy Wilson argues that the NDP in 1972 was "not a green party." However, he notes that it was critical of previous forest practices and the close ties between government and industry and that its openness to new ideas enabled the growth of the environmental movement. See Wilson, *Talk and Log*, 112.

⁶⁹ Nelson, BC, 9 November 1972, BCA, GR-1227.

⁷⁰ Opponents of the road referred to the Duncan Dam (1967) north of Kootenay Lake, and the Mica Dam (1973), then under construction. At least seven letters protesting a logging road up the Fry Creek Canyon mentioned the Mica Dam. See, for example, Trail, November 1972, BCA, GR-1227.

⁷¹ Vancouver, BC, November 1972, BCA, GR-1227.

industrial and other development prior to their introduction.” Letter writers argued that if the Forest Service built a road up the Fry Creek Canyon so that a private logging company could remove the timber, then this use of public money on public lands required public input. Not only did the public demand the right to have its wishes represented in government, but the TWA also argued that the “Forest District must recognize that quality-environment is a basic human need, and a right.”⁷²

Letters opposing the proposed road up Fry Creek were received from twenty-one communities in the Kootenay region. Many of these writers insisted that people who lived and played in the Kootenays should have a voice in how their region was run. As one writer put it: “it’s time for us, the citizens here, to tell you, the government, that we are ready and willing to exchange short term gains for some long term gains.”⁷³ Most of the letters that opposed logging in the Fry Creek watershed came from Nelson (45), Trail (39), and Rossland (16). Other letters were received from Argenta, Johnson’s Landing, and Kaslo on the north end of Kootenay Lake; from the shores of the lake and its west arm leading to Nelson; and from the vicinity of Castlegar (the site of Selkirk College), Trail, and Rossland.⁷⁴ Fourteen letters were received from Vancouver residents who had visited the Unitarian Church’s summer camp, gone on holiday in the region, or heard about the issue in the media.⁷⁵ The base of support for halting logging on the western side of the Purcells was significantly broader than was the localized campaign by the people of Argenta-Johnson’s Landing and their allies at Selkirk College for creating an ecological reserve at Hamill Creek.

As environmental historian William Cronon points out, how people interpret wilderness has to do with what they hope to find there: “As we gaze into the mirror it holds up for us, we too easily imagine that what we behold is Nature when in fact we see the reflection of our

⁷² Form letter from the TWA, 6 November 1972, GR-1227. The previous year, NDP MLA for Vancouver West, Alex Macdonald, had introduced a bill with a similar argument – that individuals had the right to a quality environment. According to the *Victoria Times*, which judged that the bill had “virtually no chance” of being passed, the bill stipulated that “every resident of BC is entitled to certain basic rights such as clean air, pure water, freedom from excessive noise and preservation of the historic, scenic, natural and esthetic values of the environment.” See *Victoria Times*, 24 March 1971.

⁷³ Johnson’s Landing, 18 November 1972, BCA, GR-1227.

⁷⁴ Twenty-eight letters were written in fourteen small- to medium-size communities in the Kootenays: Fruitvale, Montrose, Thrums, Creston, Robson, Procter, Kimberley, Kinnaird, Nakusp, Kootenay Bay, Genelle, Blueberry Creek, Meadow Creek, and Windermere.

⁷⁵ In addition, three letters came from Victoria and the Gulf Islands, one from Vernon, two from other provinces, and one from Sweden. Nine letters had no address. See “Fry Creek (1972-1973),” BCA, GR-1227.

own unexamined longings and desires.”⁷⁶ For environmentalists in the Kootenays in the 1970s, the ideal wilderness was untouched by humans. Fry Creek was considered aesthetically pleasing and deemed a “beauty spot,” “wild and lovely,” and “the most spectacular and gorgeous scene.”⁷⁷ Letters also referred to the Kokanee salmon, caribou, mountain goats, and grizzly bears that depended on the watershed. The letters build a picture of how people should relate to a wilderness area and how they could benefit from these places without exploiting them. Fry Creek was valuable because it was thought to be a “primal forest” unmarred by human intrusion (despite the presence of prospectors’ trails).⁷⁸ It offered inspiration, freedom, pure water, and pure air. Several writers discussed the perceived health benefits of hiking along the creek, arguing that it was “necessary to the psychological well-being of the people living around Kootenay Lake to preserve Fry Creek in its natural state,”⁷⁹ and referring to the “nerve soothing effect of being surrounded by the giants of the forest.”⁸⁰ The canyon offered a place where visitors could be revitalized and “made aware of something greater than [their] human selfishness.”⁸¹ The writer from Johnson’s Landing, who worked in construction and logging, argued that being in undisturbed nature helped restore his humanity:

And I guess the last, and perhaps the most important reason to me for wanting to see Fry Creek spared is that I would like my children to see it as I saw it. That is a little thing and a big thing – to say that Fry Creek is unimportant except as a means to increase the amount of money in circulation is to say that my life has no meaning save how much I earn and buy. In seeing a sight like that wilderness, I get back some of the humanity I lost while on the job, and I’ll bet there are an increasing number of people who need that same balm.⁸²

Postmaterialist values, such as an appreciation of intangible environmental benefits, influenced writers who criticized economic development at the expense of intact ecosystems and quality of life, or “ecological

⁷⁶ William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” in William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1996), 69–70.

⁷⁷ Rossland, 13 November 1972, and Johnson’s Landing, 17 November 1972, BCA, GR-1227.

⁷⁸ Nelson, 22 November 1972, BCA, GR-1227.

⁷⁹ Nelson, 19 November 1972, BCA, GR-1227.

⁸⁰ Nelson, 8 November 1972, BCA, GR-1227.

⁸¹ Place of origin unknown, 13 November 1972, BCA, GR-1227; “Fry Creek, a Plea for Sanity,” by the Trail Wildlife Association, Nelson Chapter of SPEC, and the Unitarian Church, BCA, GR-1227.

⁸² Johnson’s Landing, 18 November 1972, BCA, GR-1227.

disfigurement under the blade of economics.”⁸³ A Rossland writer argued: “ideas and values are changing, already money is no longer of prime importance.” She added that, due to work and responsibilities, many local residents did not have time to enjoy wilderness, but she hoped for “a future when [they would] all ... have more time for recreation.”⁸⁴ Writers wondered whether local beauty spots had to be “sacrificed” to the “almighty dollar,”⁸⁵ and they asserted that logging practices threatened the benefits of living in the Kootenays, including clean air, pure water, uncut forests, and natural beauty. What was needed was not further development but a re-evaluation of the human hubris that said all things could be improved by people: “Human beings need places unchanged by themselves every particle as much as they need the lumber or minerals or water power.”⁸⁶

Counterculture members and American migrants may have inspired some long-established Kootenay residents to adopt new environmental attitudes, but letters that sought to protect Canadian resources and wilderness for *Canadians* suggest that, for many writers, the desire to preserve Fry Creek was home-grown. Arn Keeling argues that nationalism played an important role in the development of environmentalism in Canada, being, “in part, the expression of a desire to exert domestic control over ‘Canadian’ nature and to incorporate nature into a positive national identity.”⁸⁷ Dam building on the nearby Arrow Lakes in the late 1960s had inspired anti-American sentiment as residents wanted Canadians to retain control and benefits of the dams.⁸⁸ A handful of letter writers, mostly from Trail, questioned whether American immigrants should have the same rights as Canadians to recreational space. One family felt strongly “that the Government should do all in its power to preserve [the] Province for *Canadians*.”⁸⁹ Proponents of preserving the Fry Creek watershed complained that the Social Credit government had allowed the United States to flood valuable land and non-Canadians to buy local land.⁹⁰ Others were concerned that the land at the mouth of

⁸³ Meadow Creek, 19 January 1973, BCA, GR-1227.

⁸⁴ Rossland, 13 November 1972, BCA, GR-1227.

⁸⁵ Kaslo, BC, 13 November 1972, BCA, GR-1227.

⁸⁶ Kootenay Lake, 13 November 1972, BCA, GR-1227.

⁸⁷ Keeling, “Effluent Society,” 279-80. Zelko also discusses Canadian nationalism in relation to environmentalism. See Zelko, “Making Greenpeace.”

⁸⁸ Loo, “People in the Way,” 161-96.

⁸⁹ Trail, November 1972, BCA, GR-1227.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* Similarly, the director of the TWA complained that a German-owned company controlled access points to recreational land in the West Kootenays: “Does it seem paradoxical to obtain permission by a German controlled company to hunt and fish on Canadian soil? Will this same alienation occur in Fry Creek?” See Trail, 6 November 1972, BCA, GR-1227.

Fry Creek was privately owned by the Unitarian Church, which they associated with Americans, despite the camp's being run out of Vancouver and the fact that the Unitarian Church had collaborated with SPEC and the TWA at the meeting in Nelson. One Trail resident stressed: "[it's] time we did something about the nude Unitarians (Americans) so that our families can use Fry Creek beach also."⁹¹

Opposition to a wilderness area came from towns where the region's forest companies were based – communities that had the most to lose if the Purcell forests were sealed off from logging. Communities in which Crestbrook had major operations – especially Cranbrook, Creston, and Creston's neighbour Wynndel – accounted for 286 of the 410 petitioners who supported the Fry Creek road, while Kaslo, the base of operations for T. and H. Holdings, Ltd., was the source of a further fifty-four signatures.⁹² As the petitions stated, many individuals in these towns relied directly or indirectly on forestry. A wilderness preserve in the Purcell Mountains, ending access to the Fry-Carney watershed, would reduce the timber supply that Crestbrook had counted on for its new mills and force forestry workers in Kaslo to travel further to work.

These petitions presented five main arguments: that forests should be managed for multiple use, that the economy and local residents depended on the forest industry, that a healthy forest industry was necessary for a good standard of living, that "overmature" timber should be harvested, and that those who wanted a wilderness park were in the minority.⁹³ Authors of the nineteen letters supporting the road represented themselves as a rational majority. They made their living from the logging industry and therefore contributed to the economic backbone of the province. They argued that "creating a massive wilderness park" would only "meet the demands of an emotional few."⁹⁴ More parks were not

⁹¹ Parentheses in original. Trail, November 1972, BCA, GR-1227. In a similar spirit, another couple from Trail recommended that the government should "keep the naked 'hippies' off the beaches and develop this area as a provincial park & Camp area for all people to enjoy." See Trail, November 1972, BCA, GR-1227.

⁹² In 1956 four companies based in Cranbrook, Canal Flats, St. Mary's Lake, and Parson merged to form Crestbrook Timber Ltd. Over the next few years, Crestbrook purchased a mill in Crowsnest Pass, bought out smaller companies in the Kootenays, and in 1964 invested in Creston Sawmills. With Japanese investment, Crestbrook moved into pulp production by building a mill in Skookumchuck. See Crestbrook Forest Industries, Ltd., *Our First 100 Years, 1898-1998: From Cranbrook Sash and Door Co. to Crestbrook Forest Industries Ltd* (Cranbrook, BC: Crestbrook Forest Industries, Ltd., 1998), 38-66, 70. Other petitioners resided in Wynndel, Nelson, Kinnaid, Grey Creek, Erickson, Elko, Kimberley, Invermere, Canal Flats, Wasa, Tata Creek, Skookumchuck, Lister, Fort Steele, Yahk, Canyon, Kuskanook, and Winlaw. BCA, GR-1227, file 4.

⁹³ Petitions, BCA, GR-1227, file 4.

⁹⁴ Petition from Kaslo residents, 27 December 1972, BCA, GR-1227.

needed since few people ventured any distance on foot into existing national parks. On the other hand, several road supporters noted that logging roads enabled local residents to gain access to the backcountry to enjoy outdoor recreation. These writers did not engage with the ecological aspects of the debate over what to do with Fry Creek but did state that recreation was not an adequate reason to preserve an area in which, they thought, few people would hike. Their rhetoric was similar to that employed by loggers in Oregon in the 1990s, where, as Terre Satterfield shows, loggers and environmentalists “talked past” each other by focusing on different issues. Loggers understood that expressing emotion could damage one’s argument, yet environmentalists, who held a higher status than loggers, had more freedom to demonstrate an emotional attachment to nature.⁹⁵

Supporters of the road tended to reject the postmaterialist values that influenced anti-logging petitioners’ arguments, and they defined success in terms of a secure livelihood and its associated material comforts. They insisted that multiple-use resource management was necessary to secure a good standard of living for their families.⁹⁶ Being able to commute daily to logging sites in nearby watersheds meant that forest workers could live in communities with their families rather than in logging camps. Multiple-use management allowed single areas to provide numerous resources: wood, clean water, and places to hike and hunt. Pro-road writers saw the creation of a wilderness park as “locking up” land for the single use of recreation, therefore benefiting only a small pool of people who would make the effort to go hiking there. They had faith in the continual improvement of forestry techniques and they wanted to protect their jobs.

Although the petitions supporting multiple use contained more than twice as many signatures as there were anti-logging letters, Minister of Lands Bob Williams seems to have given more weight to the arguments put forward in the letters. In May 1973, ELUC commissioned Alan Chambers of the UBC Faculty of Forestry to conduct a study of the Purcells, with specific instructions to investigate land-use conflicts and to propose resource management solutions.⁹⁷ Chambers submitted his report in October 1973 and recommended creating a resource inventory

⁹⁵ Terre Satterfield, *Anatomy of a Conflict: Identity, Knowledge, and Emotion in Old-Growth Forests* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), 7, 137–43.

⁹⁶ Petition dated 9 January 1973, signed in Cranbrook, Kimberley, and Fort Steele, B.C.A., GR-1227.

⁹⁷ Wilson, *Talk and Log*, 122–23.

and a regional resource planning group, using resources more intensively, and improving communication between the government and the public.⁹⁸

Wilderness advocates had more ambitious ideas. The final push for a wilderness area in the Purcell Mountains demonstrated the limits of hinterland control over resources as two young outsiders with university educations shepherded the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy into being. Ric Careless, a University of Victoria student from Toronto who successfully organized opposition to logging in the Nitinat Triangle on Vancouver Island in 1970, had first connected with Kootenay environmentalists at the 1972 Earthwatch conference in Golden.⁹⁹ Careless pressed the minister of lands to “take action on the Purcells,” then accepted a position with the ELUC Secretariat, which was offered to him by the minister.¹⁰⁰ When Alan Chambers’ Purcell study was completed, Careless heard from his friend Art Twomey in the Kimberley area that the Toby Creek watershed, through which the Earl Grey Trail continued east of the pass to Windermere, was threatened by logging. Twomey had arrived in the Kootenays in 1969 with friends from the University of Wisconsin and had built a cabin in the subalpine White Creek Valley. By showing slideshows of his photographs of the Purcell Mountains throughout the Kootenays, Twomey helped galvanize public opinion in favour of conserving the Purcells as a wilderness area.¹⁰¹ According to his autobiography, Careless approached Williams and requested that ELUC create a large protected area within the Purcell Mountains, even though this significantly exceeded the recommendations made in Chambers’ report. After discussing different land uses in the Purcells with other members of the Secretariat, Careless and Twomey drew a boundary encompassing “more than 300,000 acres of wildness” (121,405 hectares).¹⁰² The outline they drew closely resembled, although it was smaller than, the wilderness area proposed by the Earthwatch conference in Golden.¹⁰³

In March 1974, before Chambers’ Purcell Range study was made public, the provincial government announced the establishment of the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy, which included Hamill Creek and the Earl Grey Trail, with Fry Creek Canyon connected to the

⁹⁸ Alan D. Chambers to Robert Williams, 19 October 1973, BCA, GR-1002, Environment and Land Use Committee Secretariat files, 1972-1980, Box 29, File 1. Alan D. Chambers, *Purcell Range Study: Integrated Resource Management for British Columbia's Purcell Mountains* (Victoria: Environment and Land Use Committee, 1974), 1-2.

⁹⁹ Careless, *To Save the Wild Earth*, 50-53.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 58-59.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 47-50, 59-62. Gil Parker on Art Twomey, *Times Colonist*, 13 July 1997.

¹⁰² Careless, *To Save the Wild Earth*, 62.

¹⁰³ Earthwatch Conference II, “Proposals for Wilderness Legislation,” 6.

Conservancy as a designated Recreation Area.¹⁰⁴ Careless drafted the Order-in-Council creating the Conservancy, under management of ELUC, to reflect his own conception of wilderness as having a “priceless virginal quality ... either it remains intact or it is irrevocably lost.”¹⁰⁵ He also incorporated the standard of roadlessness and undisturbed “natural conditions” set out in the American Wilderness Act and reiterated at the Golden Earthwatch Conference.¹⁰⁶ The Order-in-Council stated that the Conservancy would be a

wilderness area ... maintained as a roadless tract in which both natural and ecological communities are preserved intact and the progressions of the natural systems may proceed without alteration ... Use of the recreational wilderness shall be limited to activities which do not detract from or disturb the wilderness experience sought by visitors to the area.¹⁰⁷

This, Jeremy Wilson notes, was the “first definition of wilderness found in BC legislation.”¹⁰⁸

Logging interests in the Kootenays did not accept the Conservancy quietly. In the July 1974 edition of the trade magazine *BC Lumberman*, journalist Martin A. Keeley interviewed regional logging company managers, small contractors, and mill owners who resented the threat that environmentalists and a conservancy posed to their jobs and communities by restricting their timber supply. In an article entitled “Will Kaslo Be Allowed to Die? The Decision Will Be Political,” Keeley expressed concern that Kaslo breadwinners would have to work in more remote locations and be unable to return to their families in the evening. Keeley was particularly critical of the involvement of the American Art Twomey in determining the boundary of the Conservancy – a boundary that threatened local forestry workers.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ Wilson, *Talk and Log*, 136.

¹⁰⁵ Careless, *To Save the Wild Earth*, 61, 64.

¹⁰⁶ As Careless notes: “Drawing inspiration from the U.S. Wilderness Act, I used wording, new for British Columbia, that would define what the values of the wilderness being protected were, and how they were to be cared for.” Careless, *To Save the Wild Earth*, 63.

¹⁰⁷ British Columbia, Order-in-Council 1199, 4 April 1974. Cited in Wilson, *Talk and Log*, 136, and Careless, *To Save the Wild Earth*, 64.

¹⁰⁸ Wilson, *Talk and Log*, 136.

¹⁰⁹ See the following articles, all of which are by Martin A. Keeley and all of which appear in *British Columbia Lumberman*, July 1974: “Sanity Lost in the Wilderness”; “It’s a Tragic and Frustrating Time for Crestbrook”; “Six Years’ Sweat Down the Drain”; “Too Much ‘Shifting’ around at Radium!”; “Complex Resource Planning with Too Few Tools”; and “It’s Hard to Get a Bank Loan with No Timber!” See also the following articles, also in *British Columbia Lumberman*, July 1974, and possibly by Keeley (although no author is noted): “The Purcell

At the same time as it attracted counterculture outsiders for its isolation, tolerance, and stunning landscapes, the Kootenays also experienced an intensification of the kinds of resource extraction and environmental changes that these immigrants had sought to escape: in particular, large-scale logging and dam-building operations that ran roughshod over community values and the ecological integrity of rivers, lakes, and forests. The campaigns that led towards the formation of the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy highlight a shift in environmental activism in the region. The locally driven Hamill Creek project involved participating in government funding programs, corresponding with elected representatives and bureaucrats, and enlisting the support of university professors and students. When these tactics failed to protect the watershed, residents from across the Kootenays helped to vote in a new government, held meetings in Golden and Nelson that emphasized the need for resource planning and large protected areas, and organized a regional letter-writing campaign.

Debates over a wilderness area in the Purcell Mountains revealed two understandings of the value of wilderness in this BC hinterland. Individuals whose livelihoods depended on the logging industry argued that continued harvesting of mature forests was necessary to maintain secure and comfortable ways of life. In contrast, locals with postmaterialist values and back-to-the-landers held that some watersheds were worth more untouched than they would be if they were logged. These residents wrote letters articulating their own definitions of wilderness as beauty spots, places where ecological values should trump economic values, and sites where individuals could go alone or with their families to regain their humanity. The election of the NDP was necessary to convert a timber sale into a conservancy and a recreational area, but such a transformation would not have come about without persistent pressure from those Kootenay residents who wished to halt the incursion of roads and machinery into the Purcell Mountains.

Study"; "Logging on an Empty Gut"; "Will Kaslo Be Allowed to Die – The Decision Will Be Political"; and "Kootenay Diary."