

1.0 Executive Summary

How to use this Study

This study is a compendium of resource materials providing government, communities, entrepreneurs and the public with information on a variety of ecotourism and adventure travel activities and opportunities in the Columbia Forest District. This report sorts through many of the issues facing outdoor adventure tourism in the study area, and makes some basic recommendations, at a broad, strategic level. It does not purport to be a detailed plan for community action, only a guidepost for future development.

The report is best used as a resource manual / atlas to access desired information quickly and succinctly without the need to read the entire report. For example:

- The general public, or those wishing to have a quick overview of the study results might wish to refer only to the [Executive Summary](#).
- Business people may find the industry information provided in [Section 3](#) or the specific activity information in [Section 5](#) and [Appendix 3](#) to be of most use.
- Government staff may wish to access the planning information provided in [Section 4](#).
- Community economic development people and community leaders may be most interested in the community recommendations provided in [Section 6](#).
- Those interested in business opportunities in the National Parks should refer to [Appendix 5](#).

Purpose and Scope of the Study

The purpose of this study is to prepare a Tourism Opportunity Strategy (TOS) for the Columbia Forest District. The work is an extension of the Forest Recreation and Tourism Opportunity Studies (FRTOS) and Forest Tourism Opportunity Studies (FTOS) developed by the Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture (MSBTC) over the past few years in support of community-based tourism development. This study will enable better operational management of tourism and recreation resources. In addition, it will support integrated resource and community planning targeted toward a future legacy of economic, social and environmental sustainability for district residents.

The study examines tourism trends and market opportunities as well as analyzes local resource assets and constraints to development. Key opportunities and development issues are identified for tourism product and activity development in the study area. Recommendations are provided for communities and entrepreneurs to consider in the development and promotion of the area's

backcountry tourism opportunities. The information provided by this study provides a foundation for future government, community and business planning around economically, socially and environmentally sustainable tourism opportunities in the Columbia Forest District.

Project Management

The study was commissioned by the Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture (Victoria) and the Contract manager was **Kevin Weaver**, Regional Manager, MSBTC, (Cranbrook). An Advisory Committee comprised of representatives from the communities of Golden and Revelstoke provided guidance. **Future Legacy Consulting Group** (Revelstoke and Salmon Arm) led the project, with assistance from **Lions Gate Consulting Inc.** (Vancouver). Technical mapping support was provided by **Nova Geomatics Ltd.** (Revelstoke).

Project Methodology

Preliminary Information Collection

Preliminary information was collected and a thorough review was conducted of background materials, reports, statistical information, feasibility assessments, business plans, maps, data (paper and digital), and other useful information from BC Government departments, ministries and agencies, and other pertinent sources. All existing digital data sets were imported and working base map was developed. In order to update the Tourism Resource Inventory (TRI), tourism operators and significant recreational user groups in the District were identified and sent a questionnaire based on previous TOS surveys. The survey was sent to 193 businesses, organizations and user groups. Surveys were sent to several offices of some government organizations and large businesses, so the list represents approximately 160 operators, agencies and user groups in the district. There were 41 respondents, giving a return rate of 26%. The TRI is a separate product from this report.

Selection of Tourism Activities

The Terms of Reference for the Tourism Opportunity Strategy called for the selection of ten (10) key tourism products / activities to be examined and studied in greater detail. Within the Columbia Forest District, a wide variety of recreation and tourism activities are occurring throughout the district. The study team used the results of a recently completed Revelstoke Area Recreation Inventory¹ on the west side of the district to develop a comprehensive list of potential activities that might be examined for new or enhanced tourism opportunities. The comprehensive list attempted to capture all of the varied and diverse recreational activities that were occurring within the western half of the district. Given the

¹ Revelstoke Area Recreation Inventory, Revelstoke Community Futures Corporation, July 2000.

similarities of terrain, recreational use patterns and statistics throughout the entire Columbia Forest District, it was deemed appropriate to use this list as a starting point for the selection of recreational activities for the TOS process.

In addition, the terms of reference for the TOS stated that the focus of the study would be on "...ecotourism, adventure travel and culturally based tourism development..." This helped to provide some initial direction as to which activities to consider. The comprehensive list of potential activities was presented to the project Advisory Committee (left hand side of the table below) and the committee members undertook a consensus selection process to determine which ten activities were to be examined. The committee selected the ten activities (on the right side of the table) below for detailed analysis and the identification of potential business opportunities.

LIST OF POTENTIAL ACTIVITIES		SELECTED ACTIVITIES
Alpine Skiing	Hunting	Canoeing / Kayaking Cross-country skiing Fishing Hiking Mountain Biking Mountaineering Rock climbing Nat. & Cult. Features Viewing Ski touring Snowmobiling
ATV'ing	Mountain Biking	
Berry / Mushroom Picking	Mountaineering	
Camping / Cabins	Nat. & Cult. Features Viewing	
Canoeing / Kayaking	Paragliding	
Cat-skiing	Power Boating	
Caving	Rafting	
Cross-country skiing	Rock climbing	
Fishing	Rowing	
Heli-hiking	Ski touring	
Heli-skiing	Snowmobiling	
Hiking	Touring (Auto)	
Horseback Riding		

Workshops

To assist in gathering information, workshops were held in Revelstoke and Golden in December 2000. A diverse range of business owners, guides, tour operators, economic and tourism agency representatives, and members of recreation user groups attended the workshops. The primary goal of each workshop was to *brain storm* with these knowledgeable persons to identify a number of potential *products* (tourism business opportunities) for each activity that have potential for development in the Columbia District.

Preliminary Research and SWOC Analysis of Tourism Opportunities

The study team undertook a detailed background contextual research and analysis on key issues affecting tourism development in the Columbia Forest District. This research included:

- International, national and provincial tourism market information.

- Provincial and regional tourism development strategies (especially trend analysis).
- Local tourism and other economic development strategies.
- Land and resource management planning and development activities in the Columbia Forest District and their impacts on tourism development.

A Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Challenges (SWOC) Analysis was conducted comprised of the following steps:

- Identification of the strengths of the region for development of particular tourism products.
- Identification of the weaknesses in the region for development of particular tourism products, indicating whether each weakness is correctable or intractable. Three main areas of weakness were explored: incompatibility with existing use; lack of community support; and lack of infrastructure (insufficient facilities).
- Identification of the opportunities in the region for development of particular tourism products. Rank the opportunities by filtering them through a matrix, plotting market attractiveness/growth potential on one dimension against competitiveness requirements on the other.
- Identification of the threats in the region for development of particular tourism products. Threats to resource-based tourism typically relate to management of the land and resources. Often the operator does not own the land, but rather has a license or lease to operate on it. The ownership and control of the land base in most cases rests with the provincial government (the Crown).
- Product Opportunity Analysis

The ten selected activities were analyzed to identify the best opportunity areas for the development of new or expanded ecotourism and adventure travel business opportunities. The analysis included consideration of:

- Conflicting recreational activities
- Conflicting recreation and tourism activities
- Resource extraction activities (logging, mining, hunting and trapping)
- Land use zoning
- Critical wildlife areas and sensitive environmental areas
- Transportation activities
- The potential of qualifying for a Commercial Recreation tenure per the criteria established by the B.C. Assets and Land Corporation on Crown Land, and
- Results of the SWOC analysis.

In addition, the knowledge and advice from extensive consultation with experts and operators for each product was incorporated into the opportunity analysis. The final product of the opportunity analysis is a series of “high opportunity” maps that show potential tourism product development opportunity areas, and an activity-by-activity analysis that clearly links commercial backcountry potential to the most suitable locations in the study area, as well as identifying market potential, infrastructure requirements, and issues that entrepreneurs will have to address in deciding whether to move forward with a development.

Activity Description and Analysis

This section describes the ten activities and provides a market analysis and resource analysis for each, as well as the identification of “high opportunity” areas for business expansion or new business creation in the Columbia District.

The market analysis first provides information on demographics related to the activity, and then describes psychographic profiles (user characteristics) for each of the market segments that participate in this activity. A local assessment follows that ties broad market conditions to the local area. A resource analysis is provided that examines the physical parameters (terrain and infrastructure) required to maximize the potential for business development within each activity, and identifies the issues that need to be considered in pursuing business expansion or development.

Snowmobiling

Activity Description

This activity involves the use of snowmobiles to enjoy and explore trails and remote alpine backcountry areas. Snowmobiling occurs extensively throughout the study area in appropriate terrain. The season of use is Late October to early June, with the peak occurring between December and April.

Overall Potential

The large snowfall, the allure of high alpine “powder” snowmobiling areas and the remote and spectacular scenery are all significant advantages for the Columbia District. The overall potential for snowmobiling in the district is good, but commercial development will hinge on several key factors. First, more snowmobile participants have to be convinced to purchase either guiding services or lease equipment and gear. This can only be done by adding value and service to the snowmobiling experience. Second, there is a need to improve infrastructure and hospitality services to encourage longer and more frequent trips. And third, access to the best resources will be required. Land management

and tenure policy will play big roles in this matter. From a commercial perspective, access to high quality alpine destinations is very important – access that is restricted or too distant will deter investment.

From a product perspective, new ideas that communities could explore to create snowmobile destinations include:

- The primary undeveloped opportunity is in the touring sector which could be encouraged with more backcountry infrastructure (e.g. hut development) and tour packaging. Integration into the provincial trail network advocated by the BCSF would also open up this sector.
- Snowmobile instruction and tours for specialty demographic markets including seniors and women.
- Product packaging potential with other activities such as lodges/resorts.
- Helicopter assisted snowmobiling (to the remote alpine).
- Snowmobiling events (e.g. BCSF sanctioned snowcross).

Selection of High Opportunity Areas

Within the Columbia Forest District, six areas have been determined to have the highest opportunity values for the activity of Snowmobiling resulting from the *Market Assessment and Resource Analysis*.

- North Dogtooth / Quartz Creek
- Blackwater Ridge /Marl Creek
- Mid / Upper Blaeberry River
- Boulder Mountain
- Frisby Ridge
- Keystone – Standard Basin

Ski Touring

Activity Description

Ski touring is a backcountry skiing activity that utilizes either specialized mountaineering or telemark ski equipment. Participants typically are physically fit, with at least intermediate to advanced skiing abilities, as this form of skiing is demanding. They undertake ski touring on a day-use or multi-day basis. With multi-day trips, participants stay in tents or snow-caves, or in backcountry cabins. Commercial operations are almost exclusively based from wilderness cabins. Most operators focus on “powder skiing” similar to the heli and cat skiing operators, although there is usually an added component of travel over variable scenic terrain as part of the experience. The significant difference is the exclusive reliance on self-propelled transportation. The tops of the runs are gained by

attaching “skins” to the bottom of the skis and literally hiking on the snow. There is also a greater premium placed on pristine wilderness and lack of motorized vehicles.

Overall Potential

The Columbia Forest District is well known throughout the Pacific North West as having some of the best ski touring conditions and areas. Though the Golden area has several commercial backcountry ski lodges, there is still room for development in niche areas.

Parks Canada has stated that there is potential for some immediate modest growth in the local, regional and international adventure recreation markets, principally among winter backcountry users. Mount Revelstoke and Glacier have focused promotional efforts on the parks’ high quality winter backcountry recreation opportunities.

Selection of High Opportunity Areas

Within the Columbia Forest District, six areas have been determined to have the highest opportunity values for the activity of Ski Touring resulting from the *Market Assessment and Resource Analysis*.

- The Gold Range
- Mount Revelstoke National Park / Tangiers Valley
- Rogers Pass / Glacier National Park
- The Adamants Range
- The Esplanade Range
- Yoho National Park (Wapta Traverse, Lake O’Hara)

Cross-Country Skiing

Activity Description

Nordic Skiing, for the purposes of this study, involves the use of light nordic ski equipment and techniques on prepared (track-set) or groomed trails. It is typically a day use activity undertaken in scenic frontcountry areas in close proximity to an urban area or nearby resort. Equipment can be relatively inexpensive and requires only minor skill levels and fitness, although world-class athletes can and do participate in this sport. It is particularly well suited to families and people of all ages.

Overall Potential

The overall potential for this product is very good. By taking advantage of existing groomed trails and infrastructures development can be facilitated. While natural features such as varied terrain are important, the built environment is critical – that means things like night lighting, parking, clear signage, high-quality and well-maintained equipment, transportation services and the availability of multi-activity packages can really broaden the appeal.

Potential may be especially good in situations where existing downhill ski markets can be targeted. Both Revelstoke and Golden could cater to destination-oriented skiers (e.g. family skiers and couples). Families with children value good instruction for both the children and adults, activity areas specifically for younger participants, good ski rental facilities in terms of equipment quality and size selection and dining facilities catering to families. Couples will value not only the facilities and trails for the ski activity itself, but the overall ambience of the area, including dining and accommodation.

Selection of High Opportunity Areas

Within the Columbia Forest District, three areas have been determined to have the highest opportunity values for the activity of Cross-Country Skiing resulting from the *Market Assessment* and *Resource Analysis*.

- Revelstoke Area
- Golden – West Bench
- Golden – Lower Blaeberry (Willowbank / North Bench)

Mountain Biking

Activity Description

This activity involves the use of mountain bikes for riding along secondary roads, gravel roads, trails and pathways. Mountain biking often takes riders over rough and technical terrain, sometimes at high speeds. Long distances are often covered, leading riders into remote areas. Mountain bikes have become highly engineered species of technology. There are now mountain bikes that are specially designed for cross country, down hill, and uphill riding. Like all activities that take place in the untamed outdoors, mountain biking can be hazardous. Typically, the skill level of a mountain bike rider is much greater than that of a recreational road rider.

Overall Potential

The potential is good for this product in the Columbia. Mountain biking and tour operators will need to collaborate with the local accommodation industry and other tourism providers to support their product. Packaging with other guided activities will extend the reach to soft adventurers. Developing commercial ventures in the study area will be a real challenge because it is often convenient to engage in unguided activities. With an extensive network of maps, guides and on-line resources, most visitors can gain a thorough understanding of biking options on the Internet. The key will be providing convenient support services (shuttling, rentals, repair, accommodation, meals, interpretation) to convert these participants to buyers of a value-added product.

Downhill ski areas could diversify to accommodate mountain biking during the summer season. A mix of purpose-built biking trails (gnarly trails with more obstacles) to attract extreme enthusiasts and family-oriented trails to encourage extended stays and spending in the area could be developed.

Selection of High Opportunity Areas

Within the Columbia Forest District, five areas have been determined to have the highest opportunity values for the activity of Mountain Biking resulting from the *Market Assessment* and *Resource Analysis*.

- Revelstoke Area (Mt. MacPherson – Mt. MacKenzie)
- Keystone / Standard Basin
- Golden – West Bench
- Mount Seven
- Blaeberry

Mountaineering

Activity Description

Mountaineering involves the ascent of mountains and peaks, and/or the traverse of mountainous terrain with the aid of technical climbing gear and specialized equipment. Due to its attendant hazards, mountaineering is normally only undertaken by experienced mountaineers or with the leadership and aid of an experienced guide. This can be undertaken as a day activity, but is often a multi-day excursion involving lengthy approaches and operating from remote base camps.

Overall Potential

Despite its ample alpine terrain, BC has not developed its full potential as a mountaineering destination and the Columbia District, while its natural resources may favour development, has modest potential because of its current lack of developed mountaineering products.

The association with the Canadian Rockies and the National and Provincial park system, and the fact that the area has long been associated with the “Canadian Alps” all enhance the marketability of the mountaineering product in the Columbia.

The hut product is closely associated with the development of multi-day products. Huts are the major alternative to camping and are a familiar accompaniment among European participants. The majority of the hut system in the Rockies is run by the Alpine Club of Canada (ACC) or by BC Parks. As most of these are let for a nominal charge, there is little inducement among the enthusiast contingent for guided services. Similar to other products assessed in this report, the best commercial potential is in increasing the appeal of this product to participants in the soft adventure market.

Mountaineering has been made more accessible through the use of helicopters, snowmobiles and glacier ski planes. Operators can appeal to the softer adventure market by using motorized transportation and superior accommodation facilities to offset trip durations and safety concerns. This is what heli-ski operators have done to create summer capacity for their facilities. In catering to the soft adventure participant and emphasizing the comforts of lodges and gourmet meals, clients are given the opportunity to “experience” the mountains and the thrill of summiting, without having to learn the hard, technical skills of mountaineering and climbing.

Selection of High Opportunity Areas

Within the Columbia Forest District, five areas have been determined to have the highest opportunity values for the activity of Mountaineering resulting from the *Market Assessment and Resource Analysis*.

- Rogers Pass – Glacier National Park
- Gold Range – Monashee Mountains
- Adamants Range – Selkirk Mountains
- Yoho National Park
- Mt. Clemenceau Area

Rockclimbing

Activity Description

Rockclimbing is the activity of climbing on steep rock walls, faces and bluffs using technical climbing gear such as ropes, harnesses, carabiners, camming units, etc. This is principally an outdoor activity, but increasingly, indoor climbing gyms are becoming popular where practitioners can learn or improve their skills in a controlled environment.

Overall Potential

While not exceptional, there is potential to expand the rock climbing product in the Columbia. Providing more teaching and instruction is one of the best ways to create more appeal for this product locally among participants and enthusiasts. A good model for development may be Yamnuska, Inc., a mountaineering school and guiding service based in Canmore, Alberta. They provide beginner to advanced courses in mountaineering, rock and ice climbing. More advanced courses are also available.

One sub-market that has expanded rapidly in the US and Canada is that of corporate climbing. Organizations such as Venture Up have built a sizeable commercial business catering to large corporations which use climbing for team building and experiential learning.

Selection of High Opportunity Areas

Within the Columbia Forest District, four small have been determined to have the highest opportunity values for the activity of Rockclimbing resulting from the *Market Assessment* and *Resource Analysis*.

- Lauretta Slabs
- Begbie Bluffs
- Shaketown
- Blanket Creek

Canoeing/kayaking

Activity Description

Canoeing and kayaking involve self-propelled (non-motorized) transportation around lakes and rivers, on a day-use basis, or multi-day trip. The skill level varies between novice for flat water paddling, to expert for maneuvering through technical white water rapids. It is suitable for a wide range of participants in both age and ability.

Overall Potential

The best potential is in the soft adventure/participant category for domestic, short-haul and German markets. All of these markets are seeking a broader outdoor adventure experience and will decide to participate in recreational paddling once in the region. The Columbia can offer a full range of close-in/remote adventures and is very well positioned to attract short-haul and German visitors, as the majority enters BC through the Alberta/BC border, primarily the TCH. Nature observation, wildlife viewing and fishing are also attractants for these markets. The German market, especially, is interested in wildlife viewing. Whether canoeing or kayaking, product development has to incorporate some outstanding recreational feature, aesthetic appeal or valued secondary activity. Multi-activity packaging and interpretation is essential.

The Columbia also has some outstanding rivers that offer higher grades of difficulty that appeal to enthusiasts and extreme sports, although most of the current commercial guiding is for rafting (e.g. Illecillewaet, Kicking Horse).

Selection of High Opportunity Areas

Within the Columbia Forest District, five areas have been determined to have the highest opportunity values for the activity of Snowmobiling resulting from the *Market Assessment and Resource Analysis*.

- Columbia River Reservoirs – (Upper Arrow Lake, Lake Revelstoke, Kinbasket)
- Goldstream River
- Columbia River (Golden – District Boundary)
- Kicking Horse River
- Lower Blaeberry River

Fishing

Activity Description

This activity includes fly-fishing and the use of spinning and casting gear from shore or from boats. Fishing occurs throughout the district on almost all bodies of water that are large enough to sustain harvestable quantities of fish. The reservoirs on the Columbia River (Upper Arrow Lake, Lake Revelstoke, and Kinbasket Lake) provide by far the greatest fishing opportunities as they are very large and are stocked regularly by the provincial government. A number of small alpine lakes and some creeks or rivers also provide good fishing opportunities, but cannot sustain large of fishers.

Overall Potential

The region is not well known among potential guided markets as a fishing destination; neighbouring areas have more variety, bigger fish and greater quantities of fish. However, the fishing resource is well suited for development as a secondary activity that could be targeted at the casual angler who is visiting for some other primary purpose. Therefore, the ability to provide visitors with alternative activity options is important. Experienced operators are now trying to diversify to protect themselves against declining participation and in the case of the coastal industry, further sport fishery restrictions. Many fishing lodges have broadened their products in the last few years and met with some success in catering to casual anglers (as opposed to sport fishermen).

In the Columbia, new development could focus on the growing percentage of juvenile anglers in the market, linking complementary products that have appeal for families and young people.

There may be some potential for expansion through the development of remote access, lodge-based fishing. This may or may not involve the use of helicopters (in which case the angling must be within a reasonable distance of the staging area to minimize transportation costs). The opportunity to link freshwater fishing with nature appreciation/ wildlife viewing and boating can be accomplished by increasing interpretation and awareness and creating multi-activity packages.

There is also further potential to expand fishing excursions on the region's reservoirs. Weather and safety conditions would have to be factored into development, but the lakes are well stocked and can provide access to numerous small creeks and streams where there is little fishing pressure.

Selection of High Opportunity Areas

Within the Columbia Forest District, four areas have been determined to have the highest opportunity values for the activity of Fishing resulting from the *Market Assessment and Resource Analysis*.

- Upper Arrow Lake
- Lake Revelstoke
- Kinbasket Lake
- Susan and Blackwater Lakes

Hiking

Activity Description

The activity of Hiking involves the use of trails, generally to access alpine and sub-alpine destinations. It can either be on a day use or multi day use basis. Multi day backpacking is essentially an extended hiking trip where the participant must carry all personal gear, is required to camp-out, and is travelling in remote or semi-remote terrain for up to several days at a time.

Overall Potential

Development prospects in the Columbia area are positive because of high quality resources, excellent trail systems and visitor markets that place a high value on hiking activity. Among visitors to the Columbia, hiking/backpacking is the third most important activity with a participation rate of 14% among non-residents. The potential for commercial hiking tours spans a full range of options from multi-day trekking tours to short interpreted tours of the frontcountry.

While trail development and interpretation is important, the key to building a hiking product in the Columbia may be related to marketing and promotion that will get TCH travellers off the road, into the communities and onto its trails. Any curtailment of activity in the neighbouring national parks will create spill over for the surrounding Crown land base and, presumably, those operators and communities with the facilities and capacity to accommodate more visitation.

There are numerous aides for self-guided hiking in the region, including trail books, books, maps and web sites. The Canadian Rockies is one of the most exhaustively researched hiking areas in Canada and recreational organizations offer numerous resources to assist their members with access. Thus the benefits accrued through this activity will be primarily through unguided hiking.

Commercial operators must provide additional value to gain customers, either through a quality experience (not only the hike but interpretation, meals and lodging) and/or adding other desired activities, which the customers cannot do on their own.

Many hiking participants become repeat clients, so increasing the opportunity for new experiences should increase the potential for repeat customers. Communities in the study area have a range of hiking product that they can packaged with cultural, heritage and other nature-oriented activities. For example, further interpretation of unique features like the Columbia wetlands would significantly enhance the frontcountry hiking product in the Columbia Valley.

Backpacking and heli-hiking in more remote and high elevation locales could be augmented by hut development, which would allow for multi-day tours, and linkages with higher quality amenities (e.g. accommodation). This product would appeal to the hiking enthusiast market. There is a growing market, especially in the US, for wilderness camping.

Selection of High Opportunity Areas

Within the Columbia Forest District, six areas have been determined to have the highest opportunity values for the activity of Hiking resulting from the *Market Assessment and Resource Analysis*.

- Revelstoke Area
- Keystone / Standard Basin
- Rogers Pass – Glacier National Park
- Dogtooth Range
- Hospital Creek Complex
- Yoho National Park

Natural & Cultural Features Viewing

Activity Description

This activity involves the appreciation and enjoyment of an area's natural and/or cultural features. Typically, this occurs as part of another activity, but it may be the sole purpose of a person's trip. This activity may be undertaken as part of an auto, van, bicycle or bus tour, or be part of a backcountry trip involving hiking, canoeing or kayaking. Scenic flights are also a common method of providing a quick overview of spectacular natural features.

Overall Potential

The overall potential for the development of this product in the Columbia District is very good, primarily in the areas of historical interpretation, nature observation and bird watching. Historical theme development (railway, hydro in Revelstoke, railway, exploration in Golden) has already been undertaken in the communities but could be developed much further. Higher levels of interpretation and alternate programming will have to be undertaken to expand the appeal to already busy touring travellers. Survey data indicates that educational trips are a growing attractant for this group of travellers.²

² Ecotourism – Nature/Adventure/Culture: Alberta and British Columbia Market Demand Assessment Travel Trade Survey Results, HLA Consultants and The ARA Consulting Group, 1995.

Any development of this product could complement any other outdoor product. For a tourism operator, the ability to include glacier and alpine viewing, wildlife viewing, bird watching, railway interpretation and other related products into a multi-activity package makes for a more marketable trip experience. In the Columbia District, the opportunities for unique experiences are excellent.

Selection of High Opportunity Areas

The motivation for participation in this type of activity is the desire to see and learn about certain types of wildlife species, natural wonders and cultural/historical features. We are suggesting a number of high opportunity “viewing themes”, and then identifying some of the best locations where these themes may be pursued.

- Bird watching
- Waterfall Viewing
- Wildflower Viewing
- Old Growth Forest Viewing
- Heritage Railway Tours
- Alpine History – Swiss Guides
- Fur Trade
- Transportation, Mining, and Settlement History

Community Tourism Development

The market and trend research suggests that tourism will continue to expand its economic profile in the Columbia, and, in time, comprise a greater share of the economic base than any other BC region outside of Vancouver/Whistler. The tourism industry and outdoor operators will develop more innovative products, match these to increasingly valuable niche markets and attract the financial and human capital necessary to drive development. Jobs and new sources of regional income will be created. In economic terms, the region will be more diversified and wealthier than it is today. But will it be a better region in which to live, socialize, raise a family, recreate and do business? What costs will communities be willing to bear for these ends?

We have closely reviewed the existing research and the results of our community consultation process in preparing the following discussion. The key community challenges are as follows:

- Building a sustainable tourism economy that conforms to overall community social, environmental and economic goals.
- Supporting this with a land use planning and resource management process that has a legitimate element of local input and control.
- Strategic use of community infrastructure and human resources.

- Industry and network development that maximizes local ownership and control of tourism businesses.

Tourism in the study area remains essentially a small business sector with a high degree of resident ownership and management, and as such, remains a valuable target for community development initiatives. Efforts to support and expand small business should be integrated with efforts to foster and attract businesses of all sizes that are compatible with community and tourism visions for development.