



The creation of a campsite and mud bog pit at the Grizzly Reservoir appears to have eased concerns about key domestic water sources and reservoir infrastructure for Greater Vernon Water from being damaged. Photo credit: Contributed

## An alternative for Okanagan mud bidders

Grizzly Reservoir campsite near Vernon and mud pit reduces vandalism concerns

BARRY GERDING / Nov. 16, 2017 6:30 a.m. / [LOCAL NEWS](#) / [NEWS](#)



Greater Vernon Water is optimistic over a solution to discourage mud bidders using reservoirs on the Aberdeen Plateau as their personal playgrounds.

The creation of 14-campsites on the north side of the Grizzly Reservoir accompanied by a mud pit for 4X4ers, greater enforcement of Forest and Range Practices Act regulations, fencing around the reservoir and kiosk information stations has so far spawned positive results.

Speaking to the water stewardship committee last week, water quality manager Renee Clark said the hope is the measures taken will end what had become an overnight camping “gong show” dating back to 1996.

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Clark said illegal recreation use threatened to degrade the reservoirs, which provide a substantial portion of the Greater Vernon water supply, and signage was constantly being damaged by bullet holes from people discharging firearms.

Campers were mud bogging in the actual reservoirs and the in-fill dam walls, while solar panels that allow for remote control of the dams were being vandalized.

Potential failure of the area dams or reservoirs posed fisheries concerns. Any breach also raised the potential for escaping water to ultimately cause flooding in nearby Lumby.

Clark explained the Grizzly reservoir is one of 53 community reservoir watersheds across the Okanagan surrounded by vacant Crown land without any formal designation.

“We have a license to store water and create dams in that area but no control over the land use,” Clark said. “We are fortunate not to be dealing with residential lease lots around the reservoir but people were camping up there on Crown land with no garbage or outhouse services and mud bogging in the reservoir without any enforcement in place.”

The Aberdeen Plateau watershed encompasses three storage reservoirs, six dams, two spillways, two diversion canals and a water intake. The Grizzly reservoir is situated 23 kms up from the Duteau Water Treatment Plant in Lavington.

As the province was not willing to lease the Crown land to the control of Greater Vernon Water, it left the municipal water purveyor looking for another solution, and it found one working with Recreation and Trails B.C.

Clark said the idea was to create an alternative recreation site for campers near the Grizzly reservoir properly outfitted with services that would bring with it an increased presence of Conservation Officers. As well they would hire a campsite inspector during the May long weekend and on weekends from June to September, and the reservoir itself fenced off with information signage alerting campers to the water quality importance of preserving rather than abusing the environment.

Clark said the response from campers since the site was opened two summers ago has been positive because she feels they were being offered an alternative recreation site rather than just being told to stay away from the watershed.

“We’re giving people an opportunity to play there, just not in the reservoir,” she said.

She said statistics are still being compiled on where campers and mud bidders are coming from, but anecdotally she says the area is popular for Joe Rich and Oyama outdoor enthusiasts.

“We want to have a better idea of what people are doing up there, whether it is mud bogging, trail riding, fishing or camping,” Clark said.

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