

KEEP IT WILD. KEEP IT LOCAL. KEEP IT KOOTENAY.*Can the Kootenays make their own decisions?*

(Cranbrook, BC) Jumbo Wild, a group of concerned Kootenay citizens and organizations, has launched a campaign encouraging residents to assert their positions on decision making in the Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK).

A vote on retaining decision making in the Kootenays, and likely determining the fate of Jumbo Valley, is expected to be held on March 3, at the monthly director's meeting of the RDEK.

In October, 2004, Minister of Sustainable Resource Management, George Abbott, was quoted as saying, "The final decision will be in the hands of those closest to the project. Those who will benefit most directly and who most directly understand the costs will have the final say here. The project would not be able to proceed without the approval of the Regional District of East Kootenay."

However, some RDEK directors are lobbying to relinquish their decision making power on this unpopular backcountry real estate proposal to the provincial government.

"To have this decision sent back to Victoria would be a disappointing surrender of local democracy. The promoters have failed to convince most residents that the scheme to exploit Jumbo will benefit our communities or lifestyle," said John Bergenske, a Jumbo Wild spokesperson. "If the Kootenay people cannot make their own decision in this matter that is clearly within the RDEK's mandate, we should expect serious future implications stemming from this precedent."

The vote will determine whether the Regional District will retain the ability to act on the zoning of the proposed Jumbo Glacier Resort. Jumbo Wild is urging the public to take decisive and immediate action and inform their Regional Directors as to whether they think decision making capabilities should be kept in the Kootenays or sent to Victoria.

Jumbo Wild anticipates a local decision made by elected regional officials, rather than provincial powers, will better reflect the concerns and voices of local constituents.

"Keeping the decision local would restrict the effectiveness of the promoter's already established lobbying efforts in Victoria. Kootenay people should be the ones determining the Kootenay's future," said Bergenske. "The province has given us the opportunity to make this decision, and we expect our elected officials to represent and act on the opinions of the people who elect them."

The campaign has embarked on a period of heavy advertising and announcements to raise awareness. Endorsements are expected from local personalities who consider the wild an important part of the Kootenays.

Jumbo Wild has provided information on how citizens can take action now at their website: www.jumbowild.com

"Taking action isn't hard," said Bergenske. "It's simply a matter of writing a quick note to the Regional District of East Kootenay or calling your Regional Director and saying Keep it Wild. Keep it Local. Keep it Kootenay."

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