

Management/Development Plan

Nature of proposed use:

The Osoyoos Desert Society operates the Desert Centre, which currently exists on the 68-acre parcel. We have had a License of Occupation for the past ten years; however, we wish to change this tenure to a Lease. We feel that a Lease provides greater security to continue to operate the Desert Centre.

The use of the land will not change.

Nature and Location of all proposed improvements:

No developments or improvements are planned for this parcel. We are requesting a change from a License of Occupation to a Lease.

Proposed Development & Operating Schedule:

There is no development planned.

All other relevant details of proposal:

The Desert Centre provides the public with an opportunity to learn about the local habitat. Tours are provided on a raised 1.5km wooden boardwalk. The Centre exists to promote environmental education and to promote conservation of our endangered habitat. Currently the Desert Centre is open to the public from mid April to mid October. During the remaining six months, there is very little activity at the Centre. It is our intention to allow the indigenous species to exist in the area with as little interference as possible.

Written demonstration that the land is required for the intended use:

The Desert Centre has been operating on this land for ten years. The 1.5km wooden boardwalk is not moveable, nor are the onsite trailers (they are too old to move). Our intent for the land is to remain operating the Desert Centre and to maintain the land for wildlife and conservation. We also provide a buffer for the nearby ecological reserve, Field's Lease.

With a Lease, we are able to:

- Host our annual fundraiser, Romancing the Desert
- Receive admission income from the Desert Centre
- Receive grants for special projects such as restoration research and acquirement of a solar array system;
- Maintain a team of over 30 volunteers who donate their time and skills;

- Maintain a rent-free office in the Town of Osoyoos;
- Receive donations from the public;
- Receive grants to employ biologists dedicated to conservation and restoration;
- Receive wage subsidy program grants in order to employ at least 3 students/year
- Receive scientific information from studies conducted on the site
- Receive income from on site special presentations (ie Summer Lecture Series, species info sessions and xeriscape landscaping workshops)

Zoning:

Current zoning is AG1 Site Specific for an interpretive centre.

Sewage:

Our use of the site during the six month season, with two toilets and a recorded 7000 visitors per annum, each spending approximately two to three hours on site, makes it certain that we do not approach 5000 gallons/day discharge. I estimate that during peak months there are approximately twenty flushes a day, and no other discharges.

One of the trailer structures contains two toilets connected to a septic field installed in 1998. Our water supply is a well, and when that dries up in mid June we truck water in and gravity feed the toilets from a storage tank. Apart from flushing and hand washing there is no other waste water.

Strategies to Avoid Impacts to wildlife and habitats:

The Desert centre has existed on this site for ten years. During that time, the Society has been extremely cautious to have a very light footprint on the land and on wildlife life cycles. We have done several things onsite to mitigate the impact to wildlife and habitat.

To Avoid Impacts:

1. Created a raised boardwalk through the habitat. This boardwalk has curbed the interference of visitors with the surrounding habitat: over 7000 people visit the Desert Centre each year. We have strict rules that no one is allowed off the boardwalk, and everyone abides by that rule. The local wildlife (ie Nuttall's Cottontail, Gopher Snake) have been using the boardwalk as an additional source for cover; the deer

and coyote are frequently seen walking on the boardwalk and have become quite accustomed to it.

2. We provide excellent habitat for the Behr's Hairstreak butterfly. As one of the last remaining known breeding sites for this butterfly, the Desert Centre helps to provide the Ministry with species data accounts: we have been recording first sightings, last sightings and population counts for the past 5 years. We have healthy stands of Antelope Brush for the larva and we provide Yarrow for the adults to feed on.
3. We do not put up fences. The 68 acres currently has a short fence along 14th Ave. that was installed by the previous tenure holder to keep his cows in. Free movement is allowed to all wildlife, no matter what species or size.
4. We do not use herbicides, pesticides or other chemicals anywhere on site.
5. The Centre does not create any new trails or conduct other activities that may interfere with wildlife.

To Minimize impacts:

1. We have removed noxious weed species. In the past, we have conducted weed pulls and extensive weeding programs to attempt to eradicate Knapweed and Toadflax. In communications with Lisa Scott, the local weed expert, we have begun leaving Toadflax to grow, as we have a very successful population of biocontrol agents in the area.
2. We have installed Bluebird Nest boxes. Each year, at least three pairs of Western Bluebirds have at least one successful clutch at the Centre. Swallows also use the nest boxes.
3. We monitor species occurrence. We note every sighting of wildlife and record dates of vegetation occurrences, blooms, and dormancies. Over the years, we have noted an increase in the number of individuals of wildlife species in our tenure area.