

Graupel

Cool News, Hard Facts and Mountain Media Bits From Near and Far

Smoke on the fodder: The proposed expansion of the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park into one of BC's most remote regions, the Flathead, has both proponents and opponents fuming.

Photo: Dave Quinn

THE NORTH AMERICAN WEST

"And Now to Development and Environmental Issues ... Ah, Never Mind"

Whether in the petro-rich foothills of the Alberta Rockies or the fairway n' fountain sprawl of Southern California's San Jacinto mountains, the story is the same. From Alaska to New Mexico, the mountains, valleys and coastlines of the North American West are being plundered by progress, specifically growth and development. While it's a phenomenon evident to most who live in any of the West's booming cities, vacation, or retirement hotspots, this is a story—the biggest in the region's history, say academic observers—that simply isn't being told.

According to a two-year study launched by Missoula, Montana's Institutes for Journalism and Natural Resources (IJNR), the true gravity of this trend is barely being reported on by the media—not by newspapers, radio or TV. Called "Matching The Scenery: Journalism's Duty to the North American West," the 135-page report found that a mere 20 percent of 285 daily newspapers monitored in the U.S., Alberta and BC did a "good-to-excellent" job of covering the complex issues of growth, development and the environment. Only three percent—nine papers—produced a consistently excellent calibre of coverage year-round. "We found that most western dailies simply aren't keeping up with the pace, the scale, the intensity, and the ramifications of profound change throughout the West," says IJNR President Frank Edward Allen. "Most communities and citizens are being deprived of the information and insight they need to enable communities to carry on productive conversations," Allen adds. "How else can they make responsible decisions about the region's future?"

The blame for newsrooms' sub-par performance on development and environment beats rests on the significant shortage of reporters and increased constraints in the amount of time journalists have to research and write their stories. Both are symptoms of increasing corporate ownership of papers in North America and the resulting downsizing and cost-cutting incurred in that trend, observes Allen. Over one half of the papers studied show no reporters assigned specifically to environment or natural resources stories for more than one third of their shifts.

Allen notes the IJNR effort didn't bother to take a closer look at other media for mainstream news. "We found commercial radio and TV in the West, with very few exceptions, to be chronically and woefully deficient in quality of news coverage," Allen laments. "So, such a study would have been depressing."

Which papers earned the IJNR's praise? *The LA Times*, *The Oregonian*

(Portland), *The Sacramento Bee*, *The Press-Enterprise* (Riverside, California), *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, *Idaho Statesman* (Boise), *Anchorage Daily News*, *Arizona Daily Sun* (Flagstaff), and *The Durango Herald* (southwest Colorado). *The Edmonton Journal* and *The Vancouver Sun* were included in the study but didn't make top grades. Want to read all about it? Click on www.injr.org.

—Darren Davidson

REVELSTOKE

Greg Hill Cracks a Million

Last winter Revelstoke local Greg Hill toured a million vertical feet. That's right, a million. Most heli operations give you a fancy suit when you descend a million vertical feet. But a totally self-propelled endeavour to rack up a million via skins and skis? Unheard of. "I began touring hard on October 30th and finished my season on May 19th with a million feet of touring under my skins," says Hill. Along the way, he won the Whistler Randonee (annual ski mountaineering competition) for the third consecutive time, set a new vertical record in a day (40,000 feet) and toured 37 days over 10,000 feet. "It was an endless odyssey," he continues. "So many new lines and incredible days that all blur together into an epic winter."

—Mitchell Scott

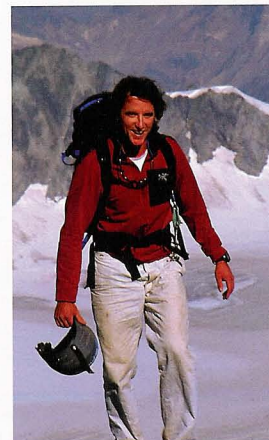


Photo: Myles Berney

Next for Hill? New knees.

ROLLING NUMBERS: STATS THAT TELL THE STORY

THE KOOTENAYS

Somewhat Doobie-ous

Whether it's truth or fable, of the many claims to fame that precede Nelson BC's reputation, few have lingered longer than the city's renown as ganja ground zero. As synonymous as this international mountain culture hub is for heritage architecture, laid back Left-Coast aura and Main Street counter-culture, Nelson's green scene—its illegal marijuana trade—has for decades cloaked the community's legend like a haze of stinky pot smoke. The question is: With marijuana use, grow-op busts, trafficking