



Restoring Nature's Balance.

News Release

December 17, 2010 • **For Immediate Release**

New Ecosystem Restoration Website Launched

The Rocky Mountain Trench Ecosystem Restoration Program has launched a website that makes hundreds of East Kootenay rangeland studies, reports, maps and airphotos widely available for the first time.

With well over 300 current and historical documents, the new website's online library at www.trench-er.com is the most comprehensive collection of material ever gathered on the region's valuable grassland and open forest ecosystems.

The library's search function makes it easy to find information on specific topics and every document can be downloaded from the website.

The Trench ER Program developed the library because no such information resource was available to scientists, natural resource managers, ecosystem restoration practitioners, researchers and the public.

Classified as fire-maintained ecosystems, East Kootenay grasslands and open forests have been studied for decades because of their significance to biodiversity, wildlife, ranching, recreation and forestry.

Gradual degradation and loss of these ecosystems has caused considerable conflict among competing land users, and this controversy has also been the focus of much study.

The Trench ER Program, the first of its kind in BC, was established by stakeholders in the late 1990s to restore local rangelands to their natural fire-maintained condition.

The library covers all of these topics and much more.

Comparative airphotos, for instance, show how much grassland and open forest has been lost since the 1950s. The impact on bighorn sheep herds is described in eight reports dated from 1967 to 2007.

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A 1949 report describes the native plants of the region, while more recent studies examine how natural plant communities have changed over time in the absence of fire.

Project Grass-Roots, a 1970 report, was one of the first to propose solutions to the social, economic and environmental problems associated with the decline in grasslands and open forests in the southern Rocky Mountain Trench.

Several reports look at First Nations' traditional use of fire as a land management tool, and many others describe how today's prescribed fires can replicate this beneficial practice.

The earliest item in the library's collection is a fragment of an 1894 map; the most recent is a 2010 research report on the long-term ecological impacts of wildlife and cattle grazing.

The website also features restoration program news, project schedules and long-term strategic plans.

Both the website and library were designed by the Cranbrook firm 7am, which also created the ER Program logos.

Rocky Mountain Trench Ecosystem Restoration Program gratefully acknowledges the financial support of Columbia Basin Trust (CBT), which delivers social, economic and environmental benefits to the residents of the Columbia Basin. Learn more about CBT at www.cbt.org.

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Rocky Mountain Trench Ecosystem Restoration Program

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TRENCH ER PROGRAM BACKGROUND

- The Rocky Mountain Trench Ecosystem Restoration Program has operated as a successful partnership of government, industry and the public since 1998.
- The Trench ER Program currently has 17 member organizations.
- Restoration is taking place on Crown land, provincial and national parks, private conservation properties and First Nations reserves from Radium Hot Springs to the US border.
- Restoring grasslands and open forests enhances biodiversity, restores habitat for species at risk, improves grazing for cattle and wildlife, improves forest health, and reduces the risk of severe wildfire.

PROGRAM PARTNERS

- BC Ministry of Agriculture
- BC Ministry of Environment
- BC Ministry of Forests, Mines and Lands
- BC Ministry of Natural Resource Operations
- BC Timber Sales
- East Kootenay Wildlife Association
- Fish & Wildlife Compensation Program (Columbia Basin)
- Galloway Lumber Co. Ltd.
- Kootenay Livestock Association
- Nupqu Development Corporation/Ktunaxa Nation
- Parks Canada
- Range Advisory Group, Rocky Mountain Forest District
- Rocky Mountain Trench Natural Resources Society (Trench Society)
 - representing: Cranbrook Archery Club, East Kootenay Wildlife Association, Kootenay Livestock Association, Rocky Mountain Naturalists, Southern Guides & Outfitters Association, The Land Conservancy of BC – Kootenay Region, Waldo Stockbreeders Association, Wildsight, Windermere District Farmers Institute
- Shuswap Band
- Tembec
- The Nature Conservancy of Canada
- The Nature Trust of British Columbia

www.trench-er.com

The image shows two screenshots of the website. The left screenshot is the homepage, featuring a large background image of a forest landscape with the text "Restoring Nature's Balance". It includes a navigation menu (ABOUT ER, NEWS, LIBRARY, GALLERY, LINKS, MAPS, CONTACT), a "NEWS" section with two articles, a "Trench ER Research Library" section with a search bar and download options, and a "NEWSLETTER SIGNUP" form. The right screenshot is the "Trench ER Research Library" page, which contains a search bar, a list of search results for "1984 Map East Kootenay" and "2008 East Kootenay Trench Elk Inventory", and a "Sample keywords" section.