



Kootenays, Map 1

F. The Columbia-Kootenay

1. Evolution of the Columbia-Kootenay electoral districts

Immediately prior to the work of the 1966 Angus Commission, there were eight electoral districts in the geographical area we describe as the Columbia-Kootenay (see Kootenays, Map 1).

Moving from east to west, they were:

- Columbia
- Fernie
- Cranbrook
- Revelstoke
- Kaslo-Slocan
- Nelson-Creston
- Rosland-Trail
- Grand Forks–Greenwood.

a. The Angus Commission (1966)

The Angus Commission decided to treat the Grand Forks–Greenwood area as part of the Okanagan rather than the Kootenays (where it stayed until 1999), which left seven electoral districts in the Kootenays. The commission was satisfied that, due to improved road access, the East and West Kootenays should be treated as one region. Although its population justified only three members in the Legislative Assembly, the commission decided that proper and effective representation required four members.

To reduce the number of electoral districts from seven to four (see Kootenays, Map 2), the commission combined the Cranbrook and Fernie electoral districts into a new Kootenay district. It also combined the Columbia, Revelstoke and Kaslo-Slocan electoral districts into a new Columbia River district – although there was no great community of interest between the three portions of this new district (to be divided by Rogers Pass), improved transportation now made such a union reasonable.



Kootenays, Map 2



Kootenays, Map 3

The Legislative Assembly adopted the commission's recommendations respecting the Rossland-Trail, Nelson-Creston and Kootenay electoral districts (see Kootenays, Map 3). However, it rejected the proposed new Columbia River district. Instead, it reverted back to a Columbia River district in the east, and a new Revelstoke-Slocan district in the west. As a result, the Kootenays region was reduced from seven electoral districts to five.

b. The Norris Commission (1975)

The commission proposed that the Kootenays be reduced from five electoral districts to four, so that district populations there would more closely approximate the population of the central interior and Okanagan districts rather than the districts in the North. It did so by combining the northern part of Columbia River with the Revelstoke-Slocan district into a new Columbia–West Kootenay district (see Kootenays, Map 4).

The Legislative Assembly did not adopt any of these recommendations, retaining the five Kootenay electoral districts.



Kootenays, Map 4



Kootenays, Map 5

c. The Eckardt Commission (1978)

Judge Eckardt concluded that retention of Revelstoke-Slocan could not be justified – it had a population of 18,000, against a provincial electoral quotient of 44,000. In considering how to re-allocate the Revelstoke-Slocan territory, he was persuaded by the residents of Revelstoke that their communication ties were to the west (Shuswap), not to the east (Golden). Similarly, residents of Golden expressed the strong view that their ties were to the south, not to the west. Consequently, Judge Eckardt recommended (see Kootenays, Map 5) that Revelstoke-Slocan be eliminated, with the northern half being transferred into the Shuswap district, and the southern half being distributed between the North Okanagan and Nelson-Creston districts. He also proposed that Kimberley be transferred from Kootenay to Columbia River, to equalize the population.

The Legislative Assembly adopted all of Judge Eckardt's recommendations, resulting in four electoral districts.

d. The Warren Commission (1982)

None of the Warren Commission's recommendations affected the Kootenays.

e. The McAdam Commission (1984)

None of the McAdam Commission's recommendations affected the Kootenays.

f. The Fisher Commission (1988)

Judge Fisher decided to retain four electoral districts in the Kootenays. In his interim report, he transferred Revelstoke from Shuswap-Revelstoke into Columbia River (which he proposed renaming Columbia River–Revelstoke), having regard to the excellent highway connections between Revelstoke, Golden and Kimberley and the community interests in the area based on the forestry industry and tourism. This change would still leave Columbia River–Revelstoke with a smaller population than surrounding districts, but those other districts were smaller in area and therefore easier to service. He canvassed other possible solutions for the lack of population in this area, but rejected them because they would



Kootenays, Map 6



Kootenays, Map 7

have required wholesale changes to the boundaries of all adjacent districts and unacceptable disruption of links between communities in the area. He also proposed expanding Rosland-Trail westward, to include Grand Forks and Greenwood, but in his final report abandoned the idea.

The Legislative Assembly adopted all of Judge Fisher's recommendations. (see Kootenays, Map 6).

g. The Wood Commission (1999)

In its interim report (see Kootenays, Map 7), the Wood Commission recommended that, in order to bolster the Rosland-Trail district's population, and for geographical, economic and historical reasons, it should be expanded westward to include Grand Forks, Greenwood, Midway and Rock Creek. In addition, Salmo should be transferred into the Nelson-Creston electoral district. The commission also initially proposed that Columbia River-Revelstoke be enlarged by adding the communities along the shores of the Arrow Lakes, including Nakusp, Burton, Fauquier, Needles and Edgewood.

In its final report, the commission abandoned the idea of enlarging Columbia River–Revelstoke (see Kootenays, Map 8). People from those communities persuaded the commission that they had worked long and hard to develop connections with the Kootenay communities to the south. All government services and trading patterns tied the Arrow Lakes to the south, with Nelson and Castlegar, rather than with Revelstoke to the north. Eliminating these communities would leave Columbia River–Revelstoke with a deviation of minus 27.8 percent. Having committed itself to preserving regional representation, and in recognition of the electoral district’s size, its limited transportation facilities (which, particularly in winter months, can leave pockets of population isolated from the rest of the province) and its remoteness from Victoria, the commission was satisfied that this electoral district represented “very special circumstances.”

The Legislative Assembly adopted all of the Wood Commission’s recommendations.



Kootenays, Map 8

2. Our analysis of the Columbia-Kootenay electoral districts

The geographical area that we define as the Columbia-Kootenay region currently has four electoral districts: Columbia River–Revelstoke, East Kootenay, Nelson–Creston and West Kootenay–Boundary (see map, page 144). These electoral districts, with their deviations at the time of the 1996 census, and now, are as follows (see Table 13):

TABLE 13: CURRENT SMP ELECTORAL DISTRICTS IN COLUMBIA-KOOTENAY

| Electoral District | 1996 deviation* | 2006 deviation** |
|---------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Columbia River–Revelstoke | -27.8% | -37% |
| East Kootenay | -18.9% | -28.1% |
| Nelson-Creston | -4.3% | -16.4% |
| West Kootenay–Boundary | -2.5% | -17.1% |

* based on 1996 census data, and assuming 79 electoral districts

** based on 2006 census data, and assuming 79 electoral districts

As discussed earlier in this part (Okanagan), we have decided that the Boundary communities of Bridesville, Rock Creek, Midway, Greenwood, Grand Forks, Big White and Christina Lake should be part of our proposed Boundary-Similkameen electoral district, whose eastern boundary will be the Blueberry–Paulson Summit. This means that the total population of the Columbia-Kootenay region is reduced by 12,127 to 144,827. If we take that

population and create four electoral districts with equal population, each one has a deviation of minus 30.5 percent (based on 79 electoral districts). With the maximum number of 85 electoral districts, the deviation would be minus 25.2 percent. Creating three electoral districts with equal population yields a deviation of minus 7.3 percent based on 79 electoral districts or minus 4.9 percent based on 81.

We are faced with a large and sparsely populated electoral district (Columbia River–Revelstoke) with a current deviation of minus 37 percent (based on 79 districts), significantly outside the statutory range of plus or minus 25 percent. At the same time, the other three Kootenay electoral districts (with a reduced population after moving the Boundary-Similkameen boundary eastward to the Blueberry–Paulson Summit) have deviations averaging minus 26.5 percent, based on 81 electoral districts. We do not think that such high negative deviations for these three relatively compact and accessible districts can be justified. However, if we increased the population of these three districts (by encroaching into Columbia River–Revelstoke) so that their average deviation approximated the 1996 average of minus 8.6 percent, based on 81 electoral districts, it would result in Columbia River–Revelstoke’s populat-

ion being reduced to approximately 5,600 – far too low for an electoral district in any area of the province.

Our conclusion is that the population of the Columbia-Kootenay region can no longer support four electoral districts – it must be reduced to three.

In developing a three-district configuration for the Columbia-Kootenay, we applied certain criteria that we thought appropriate for this area. We consider municipalities to be an important indicator of community interests and, for that reason, have sought to avoid splitting any municipality between two electoral districts. Similarly, communities situated physically close to each other should, in our view, be included in the same electoral district whenever possible.

Beginning in the east, the current Columbia River–Revelstoke electoral district stretches from Revelstoke in the northwest to Kimberley in the southeast, but does not include Kimberley’s close neighbour Cranbrook. It has a deviation of minus 37 percent based on 79 electoral districts, well outside the statutory limit.

In our view, in order to increase this district’s population to a more justifiable negative deviation, the solution

would be to exclude Kimberley and to extend its southern boundary farther southeast, to include the small Elk River communities of Fernie (pop. 4,217), Sparwood (pop. 3,618) and Elkford (pop. 2,463), (see map of proposed Kootenay East electoral district page 147). Several benefits flow from this configuration – it keeps within one electoral district all the smaller Columbia River and Rocky Mountain Trench communities, and allows for the adjoining cities of Kimberley and Cranbrook to be in the same adjoining electoral district to the west. Our proposed Kootenay East electoral district will have a deviation of minus 21.3 percent.

Moving westward, we needed to create two electoral districts in the remaining Kootenays area. Ideally they should have similar deviations (about plus 3 percent each), but geography and demography made that an unattainable goal. Beginning at the western boundary of this area (the Blueberry–Paulson Summit), we are proposing a westerly electoral district (Kootenay West) that would include Rossland, Trail, Montrose and Fruitvale in the south, and Castlegar, Nelson and Nakusp farther north. It would extend northward to just south of Galena Bay. The eastern boundary would follow the height of land between New Denver and Kaslo (see map of proposed Kootenay West electoral district page 146). It would have a deviation of plus 6.4 percent.

The more easterly electoral district, which we propose be named Kootenay South, would include Kaslo, Salmo, Creston, Cranbrook and Kimberley (see map of proposed Kootenay South electoral district page 148). Its deviation would be plus 0.1 percent, close to parity.

We considered a different boundary line between Kootenay West and Kootenay South, so that the deviations would be closer to plus 3 percent each. However, that could only be accomplished by dividing Nelson between both electoral districts, or by drawing the boundary between Montrose and Fruitvale. Neither alternative was acceptable to us – splitting small communities means violating long-standing community in-

terests, and Montrose and Fruitvale have much stronger community interests with Trail than with Cranbrook.

We considered bringing the boundary between our proposed Kootenay West and Kootenay South electoral districts down Kootenay Lake and to the east of Salmo, so that communities such as Kaslo, Balfour and Salmo were included in the same electoral district as Nelson. However, that would have left our proposed Kootenay West district with a deviation of plus 20 percent which, in our view, would be unjustifiably high.

3. Conclusion

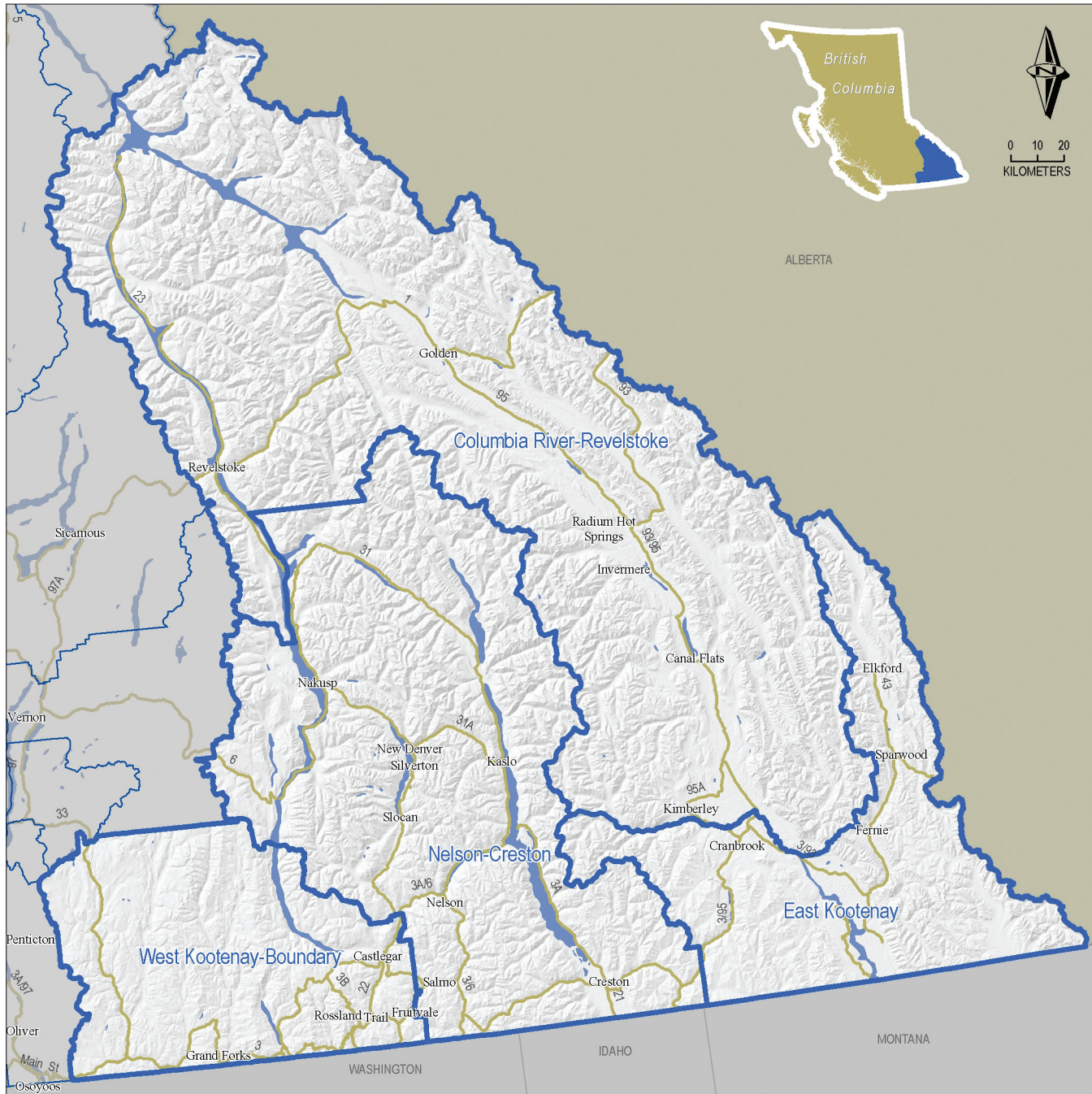
Accordingly, we propose that there be three electoral districts in the Columbia-Kootenay region, as follows:

TABLE 14: PROPOSED SMP ELECTORAL DISTRICTS IN COLUMBIA-KOOTENAY

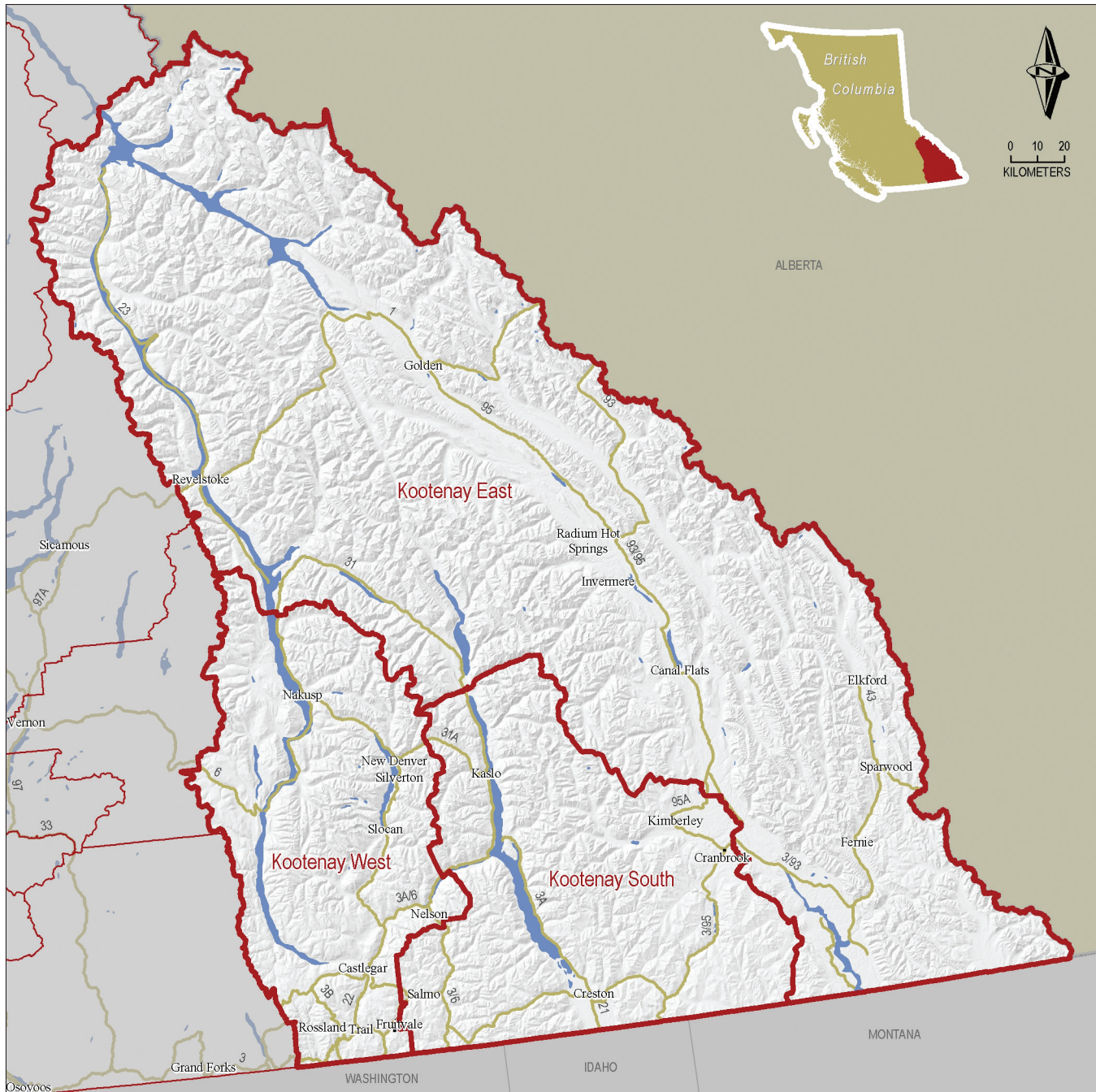
| Electoral District | Sq. Km. | Population | Deviation* |
|--------------------|---------|------------|------------|
| Kootenay East | 50,419 | 39,951 | -21.3% |
| Kootenay South | 13,870 | 50,851 | +0.1% |
| Kootenay West | 11,843 | 54,025 | +6.4% |

* based on 81 electoral districts, with a provincial electoral quotient of 50,784

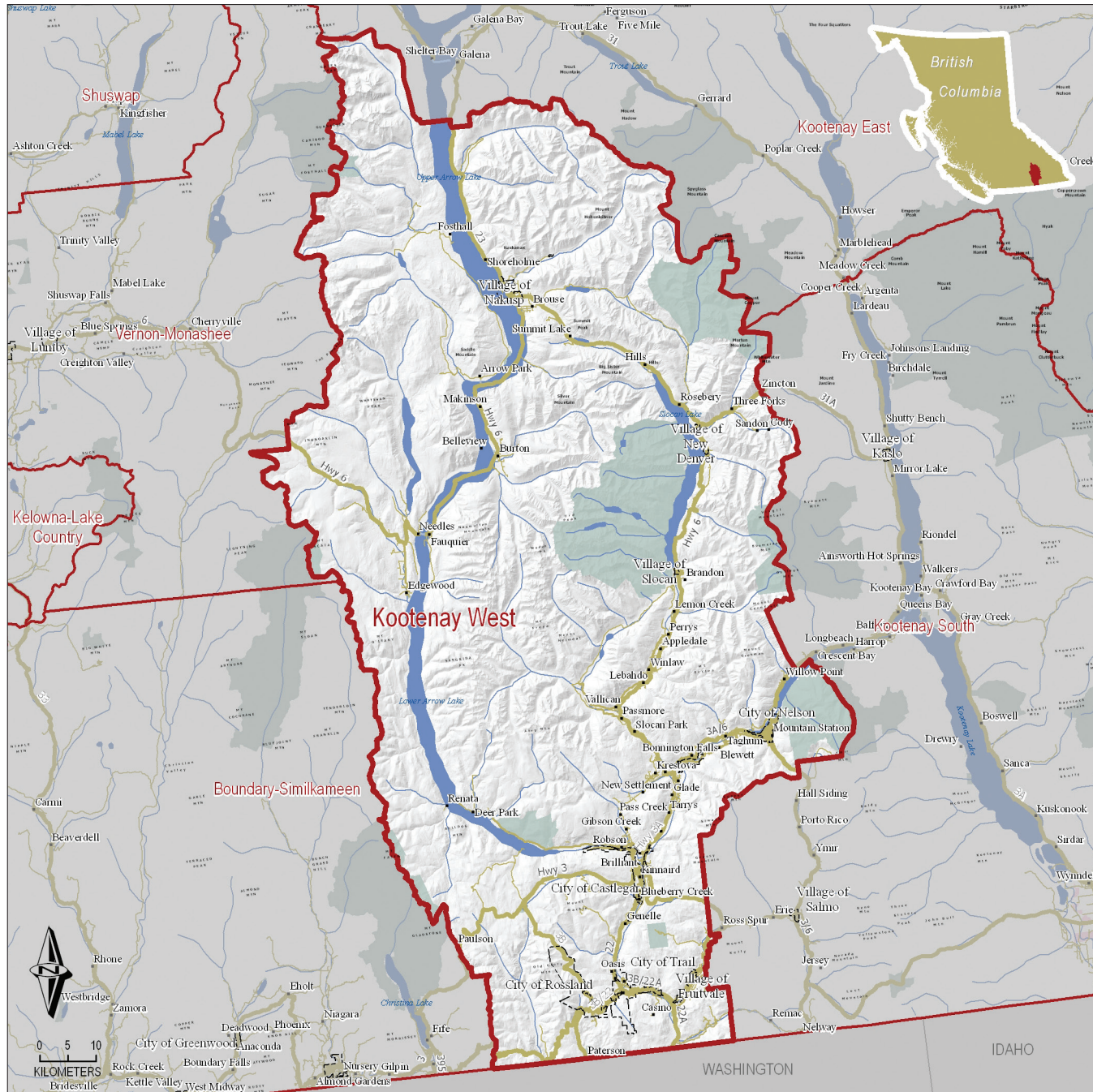
Region: Columbia-Kootenay – Current Electoral Districts for the Region



Region: Columbia-Kootenay – Proposed Electoral Districts for the Region

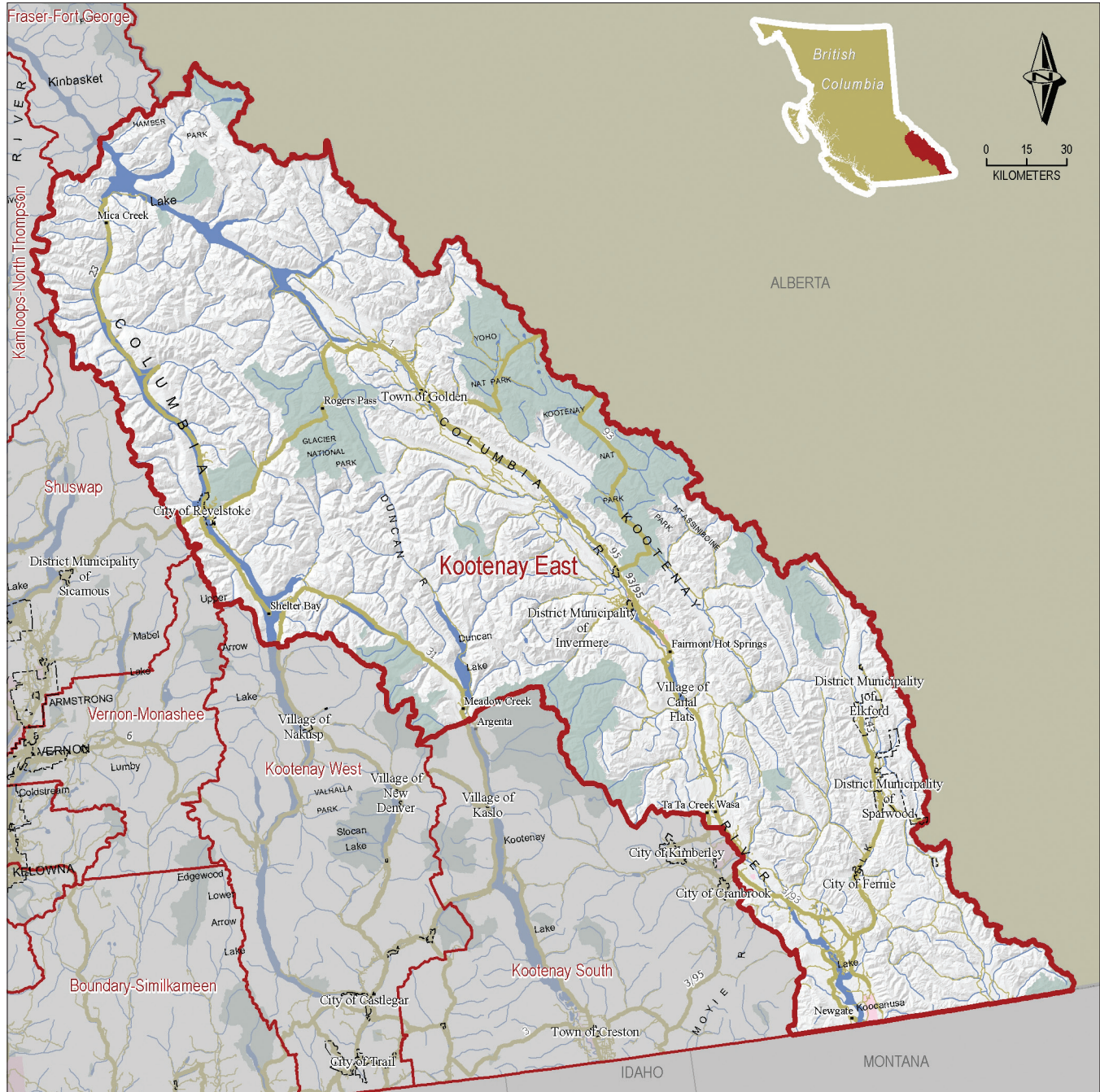


Region: Columbia-Kootenay – Proposed Kootenay West Electoral District

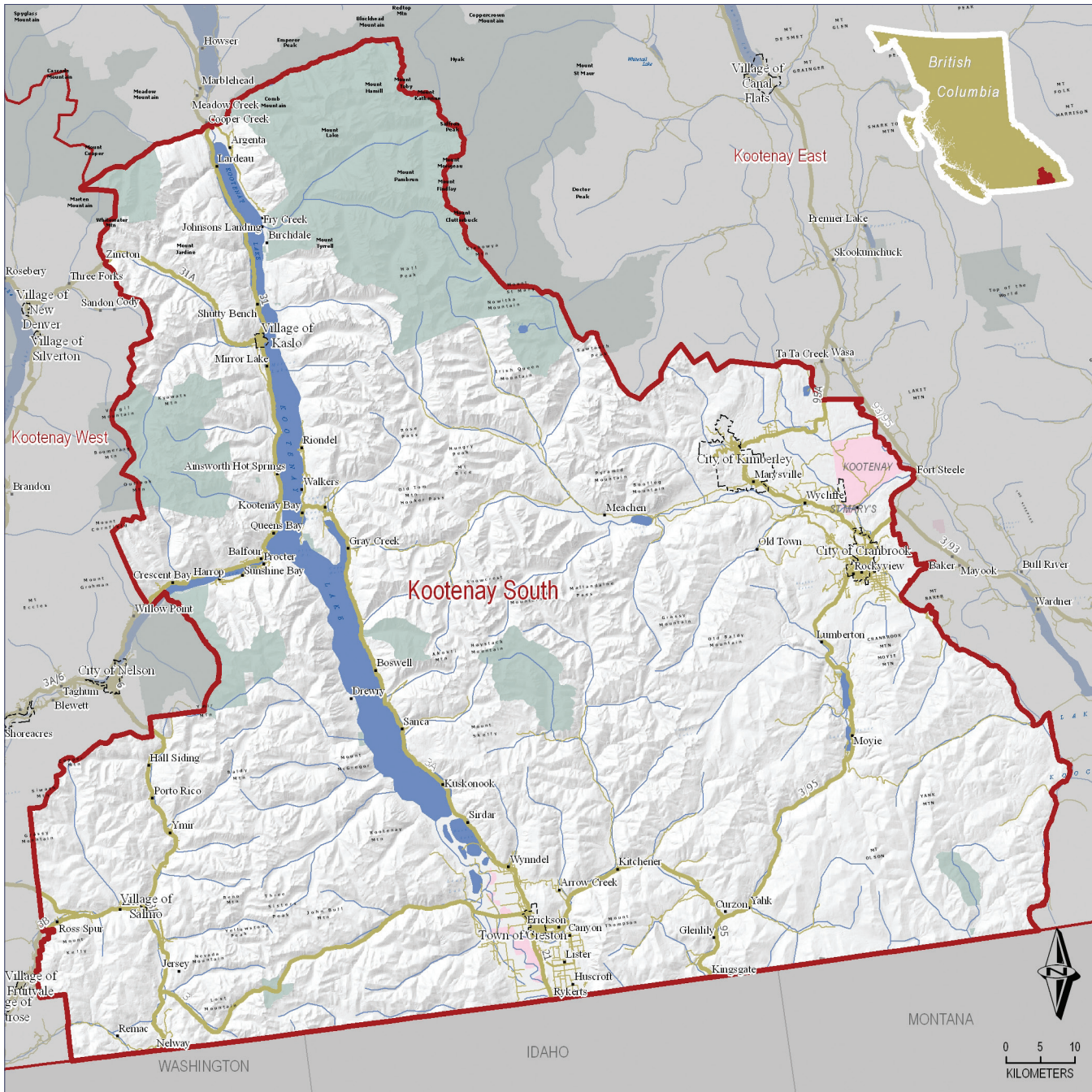


PART 9 – PROPOSED SINGLE MEMBER PLURALITY BOUNDARIES

Region: Columbia-Kootenay – Proposed Kootenay East Electoral District



Region: Columbia-Kootenay – Proposed Kootenay South Electoral District



PART 9 – PROPOSED SINGLE MEMBER PLURALITY BOUNDARIES