

Sage Orienteering Club President's Report to OBC AGM 2023

The Sage Orienteering Club had a generally successful year in 2023. This year we focused our efforts predominantly on driving new membership and participation growth in Salmon Arm along with organizing the Western Canadian Orienteering Championships (WCOCs) in Kelowna. Our membership numbers are lower than we would have hoped, but are not a catastrophic drop from historic levels. The largest drop is in Kamloops, due to the lack of a junior program or other events this year. Participation numbers are roughly as anticipated.

In many respects, Sage is a conglomeration of four different smaller clubs in Salmon Arm, Kelowna, Kamloops, and Revelstoke; however, we share some common issues. An increasingly time consuming aspects of organizing orienteering events is permitting. Regional District and City parks are either increasingly challenging to get permits, or are impossible to get permits. Other than taking far more volunteer time than it used to, we are able to get permits (when needed) for provincial recreation sites on crown land areas, but these tend to be further from the city where it is harder to draw new participation. At least in part tied to this problem, is a lack of volunteers: both trained officials and general volunteers for anything not at an actual orienteering event. This is due in part at least to poor volunteer recruitment and retention strategies by the club, something we need to work on going forward.

Brief summaries of each individual community within our larger club are below:

Salmon Arm

Spearheaded by two key volunteers, Salmon Arm had an excellently permitted, organized, and attended spring series of beginner friendly events that had excellent participation. With these two volunteers being busy in the fall, we struggled to organize a proper series of events, with only a few self directed events being offered. We are considering a two day ski-O weekend for this winter at Larch Hills.

Kelowna

The highlight of the year was organizing a very successful WCOCs & BCOCs weekend on brand new maps on some simply spectacular terrain. The event was very well reviewed and attended by out of club members, but it was a drain on our organizing capabilities: almost no other events were organized in the spring in Kelowna so we had limited new faces join the club during this time. This fall, we started a weekly evening training series which provided some excellent training opportunities and we hope will continue to grow moving forward into next year. Our largest challenge in Kelowna is permitting for natural environment parks close to the city is almost impossible, and most urban parks are insufficiently safe for an evening event, even if we could get permits.

Kamloops

We have very limited volunteer time and resources in Kamloops, which has meant a slow decline in events and membership in the community. The core of the club is decidedly now in Salmon Arm and Kelowna, and without some new faces in Kamloops moving in from elsewhere, this trend will likely continue. Our volunteers in other communities are stretched too thin already elsewhere to help that far from home.

Revelstoke

We returned to organizing some events in Revy for the first time since Covid, and were pleased to maintain our local organizer (thanks Bart!) and some local volunteers and participants. We need to target an officials course here next year (or possibly just online), and possibly a new adventure-run level map to encourage future growth and long-term stability.

Sage looks forward to addressing some of our concerns regarding volunteers this coming year, and is hopeful for the continuation of a strong orienteering scene in interior BC.

Report prepared by David Bakker, November 5, 2023.