



Forest Enhancement  
Society of British Columbia

**BARKERVILLE**  
— HISTORIC TOWN & PARK —

## **Barkerville Historic Town & Park Completes First Phase of Wildfire Mitigation Work**

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**Barkerville, B.C.:** heralded as the largest living-history museum in western North America, Barkerville Historic Town & Park (BHT&P) was declared a National Historic Site of Canada in 1924 and a Provincial Heritage Property in 1958. As with other resorts, heritage sites, and recreation or tourism destinations in B.C., the catastrophic wildfire seasons of 2017 and 2018 put a damper on tourism numbers. In 2017, a wildfire travelling at 4.5 kms per day came within just 12 kms of the historic site, something BHT&P CEO Ed Coleman and his team knew they needed to do something about in order to protect this irreplaceable historic Canadian asset.

“The 2017 wildfires came much too close to the heritage park and we knew in order to protect this historic town, immediate and strategic measures needed to happen,” said Ed Coleman, CEO, BHT&P. “We have been working on fuel mitigation planning for 3½ years, designing the prescriptions and subsequent treatments to protect the site from a wildfire.”

The planning and treatment of this first phase of the fuel mitigation plan presented several challenges due to the high elevation of Barkerville at 4,300 feet, challenging fuel types, and the need to protect heritage and other resource values located in the treatment area. Very few fuel management projects have been done in this type of physical environment, so it was completely new ground for Coleman and his team.

“This was, to say the least, a complex fuel management project, but the brainpower and experience that came together to help was incredible,” said Coleman. “We are truly proud of the many, many partners and forestry experts from the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations & Rural Development, Heritage Branch, West Fraser Mills, Lhtako Dene Nation, and the Forest Enhancement Society of B.C. (FESBC) who collaborated to develop a successful treatment on the landscape.”

Phase 1 of the 1-million-dollar project included treatment of approximately 52 hectares immediately east of Barkerville historic townsite. Work saw a fire access road built with a 10-metre fuel break on either side of the road done by machine. The area beyond was selectively harvested followed by machine and hand thinning, hand pruning and piling of residual fuel. The residual fuel piles will be chipped or ground and trucked to Cariboo Pulp and Paper for hog fuel. This increases fibre utilization and helps the Province achieve its greenhouse gas reduction targets.

“Thanks to the work of Ed and his team, this has been a great project with outstanding results,” said Ray Raatz, Operations Manager, FESBC. “In addition to the protection benefits of the treatment, there are new opportunities for historical interpretation and recreational trails in the treated area, and significant operational learnings that can be shared for other fuel mitigation projects conducted in a similar environment. Our Society was pleased to help fund such an important project and has approved an additional \$75,000 of funding for another phase of treatment.”

Understanding the irreplaceable value of the historic site is Jennifer Goad, Executive Director, Mountain Resorts and Heritage.

“Barkerville is the largest of the Province’s heritage properties and a significant driver of the regional economy,” said Goad. “The site provides for over 150 jobs, had a regional economic impact of \$20-25 million and is an important site to contextualizing the Province’s resource management history. Reducing the risk of wildfire at the site is critical to prevent irreplaceable damage to this provincial heritage asset, allowing its heritage, community, and economic development values to persist for future generations to enjoy.”



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As for the future, there are five additional projects the BHT&P is looking to undertake

“We look forward to the future as we care for the past,” said Coleman. “One where the historic town and park are safe from damaging wildfires so we can continue to welcome thousands of tourists each year and provide both employment and enjoyment because of the proactive work we did now.”

**For More Information on Barkerville Historic Town & Park’s Fuel Mitigation Project:**

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