



Forest Enhancement  
Society of British Columbia



## Safeguarding Big White through Wildfire Risk Reduction

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**KELOWNA B.C.**—Close to 100 hectares near [Big White Ski Resort](#) will be treated to reduce interface wildfire risk. The goal is to minimize potential home, resort infrastructure and business loss due to wildfire, and ensure the resort's continued contribution to the economy. The treatments will also help to protect part of the mountain's only egress route.

Big White, which is the highest point of the Okanagan Highlands, is home to 251 year-round residents and a community school with over 50 students.

“When you live in a community where there's only one road out and you see the devastation a fire can bring, it's nerve racking,” said Michael Ballingall, senior vice president, Big White Ski Resort. “In 2003, during the Okanagan fires, we were on evacuation standby with only one road out. The forest around the resort hasn't burned for over 200 years, so we were looking for a program to help us clear around Big White.”

Ballingall said having the fuel cleared is a huge relief for residents, businesses and property owners, noting the resulting openness enhances the overall feel of the area.

The [Forest Enhancement Society of B.C.](#) will provide up to \$500,000 in support of wildfire risk reduction activities close to Big White Ski Resort.

“FESBC is excited to be funding the wildfire risk reduction project adjacent to Big White Resort. The collaboration between Interfor, Mountain Resorts Branch, and the BC Wildfire Service has been excellent and has enabled the first phases of the treatments to occur,” said Dave Conly, FESBC operations manager. “FESBC is funding the post-harvest fuel reduction treatment to further reduce the fine fuel loading.

“We are pleased to see this project proceed and result in a more fire resilient area adjacent to Big White helping to protect residents, visitors and infrastructure, all while creating many good local forestry jobs during a time of economic hardship.”

The areas will be harvested to optimize fibre recovery, resulting in a more open forested area that is unable to support intense fire behaviour. The treated area will also increase access and safety for any future fire suppression activities using recommendations from the [2010 Big White Resort Wildfire Protection Plan](#).





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“The relationship we have with Westbank First Nations has always focused on best practices,” said Ballingall. “We are proud of the work that was done, the results and the safety assurances it brings.”

Ballingall, who is also a [Tourism Big White Society](#) board member, notes that the work will also enhance accessibility for summer hikers and bird watchers.

“The local community is really excited they’ll be able to use the area. The benefit of the work is two-fold—enhanced community protection and tourist experiences—and that’s exciting for everybody”.

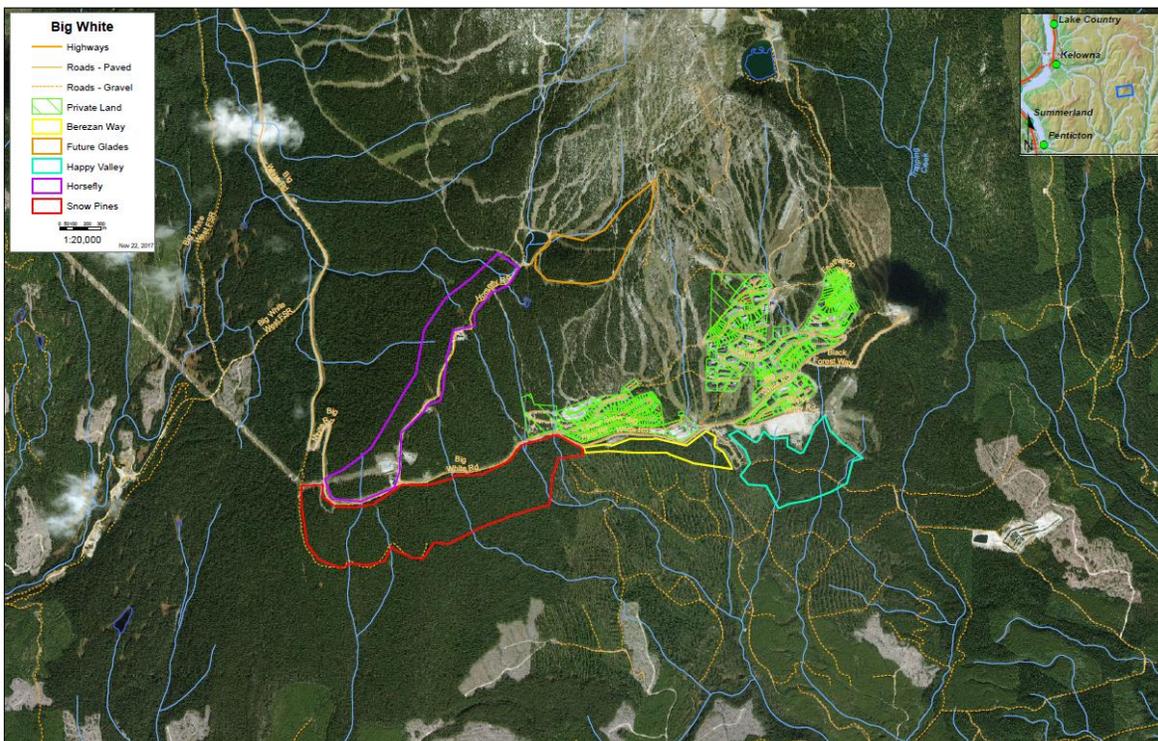
Remaining work will resume this spring and includes hand cutting, piling and pruning. The project is scheduled to be completed by late September 2020.

**For more information about the Big White Ski Resort:**

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Two treatment areas: purple is the Horsefly treatment and red is the Snow Pines treatment.