



Forest Enhancement
Society of British Columbia

Wildfire risk mitigation project underway in Kelowna area

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KELOWNA, B.C. Now that spring has arrived, wildfire risk reduction work is well underway in the Kelowna area, including a \$1.6 million project southeast of Kelowna funded by the Forest Enhancement Society of British Columbia.

Staff from the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development are working in an area near Myra-Bellevue Provincial Park on provincial Crown land. The goal is to thin out dense stands of pine and Douglas-fir trees and remove accumulations of dead wood that currently pose a significant fire hazard in areas covering about 1,000 hectares.

This project started with a wildfire management specialist identifying blocks of Crown land where landscape-level treatments would be effective in reducing wildfire threats. Treatment activities in these 15-hectare and 50-hectare blocks include thinning trees, trimming the lower branches – or ladder fuels – of the remaining trees, and then removing that wood and other forest fuels from the ground.

In the event of a future wildfire in the area, less flammable material would be available to burn and the risk of a catastrophic fire would be reduced. This work will also improve firefighter access to the area and make it easier and safer for them to fight a fire.

“This project, and other wildfire risk reduction projects, provide an enhanced level of safety for local residents and help protect local infrastructure,” Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development Minister Doug Donaldson said. “This project is one example of how funding from the Forest Enhancement Society of B.C. is making a difference in the Okanagan and elsewhere in the province.”

When the City of Kelowna recently updated its Community Wildfire Protection Plan, one of the goals was to apply for Forest Enhancement Society of B.C. funding to develop a landscape-level fuel break in the southeast Kelowna area.

Ever since that funding was approved, City of Kelowna urban forestry supervisor Andrew Hunsberger has been working collaboratively with ministry staff to engage with private landowners and keep them updated on the project.

“Whenever we’re removing trees from areas close to parks and homes, people are naturally interested in the details of what’s happening,” said Hunsberger. “We hosted open houses and engagement sessions to let the general public and landowners know why this project is necessary, explain the many benefits for citizens and the environment, and outline what to expect when work got underway.”

Local forest licensee Gorman Bros. Lumber Ltd. is doing the initial work of thinning trees to reduce the significant fuel loads, with merchantable timber harvested through its regular cutting permits. After that work is complete, BC Wildfire Service crews will begin removing woody debris and ladder fuels from the area.



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“Our society is pleased to provide planning, prescription and site preparation funding for this project, since we anticipate that this collaboration between the ministry and the municipality will reduce the risk of wildfires that could damage or destroy local residences and displace citizens,” said Forest Enhancement Society of B.C. operations manager Dave Conly. “Projects like these align with our society’s goals and make a meaningful difference for British Columbians, as we carefully and responsibly manage one of our most significant natural resources: our forests.”

The treatment areas are in an ungulate winter range area, so opening up these tree stands will enhance mule deer habitat. A wildlife biologist was engaged during the development of the treatment prescription to ensure that the planned activities would help protect and enhance this valuable habitat.

Trees that will be planted in these previously burned areas will provide cover and forage for a variety of wildlife, improve the future timber supply, and provide carbon-related benefits to help fight climate change. Biomass produced during treatment operations will be chipped and sold to a cogeneration plant for energy production, to create carbon benefits and contribute to the mitigation of climate change.

For Media Interviews:

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