

Targeted Grazing – SE Kelowna Wildfire Fuel Mitigation Project:

(from Rob Dinwoodie, Range Officer, Ministry of Forests Lands & Natural Resource Operations)

The South East Kelowna wildfire fuel mitigation project funded by the Forest Enhancement Society of BC (FESBC) has been designed to provide wildfire risk reduction to the adjacent community. The summers of 2017 and 2018 were unprecedented with respect to wildfire in the province of BC as well as the Okanagan Shuswap district. Many initiatives have been implemented to reduce the wildfire risk within interface areas of communities. Wildfires commonly spread from fine fuels in the understory to ladder fuels (branches and underbrush) to the crowns of mature trees resulting in fires that are difficult to contain. Prescribed burning has been used to reduce the fine fuels, but due to the resulting smoke and small windows of application, does not provide a consistent method of fine fuel reduction. Prescribed burning can also be expensive with need for consistent long term funding. Targeted grazing provides both fuel reduction at a minimal cost to the city and province, through the use of existing range licenses, where the use of cattle provides a reduction of fuels and beef gains for ranchers while providing to wildfire risk reduction to communities.

The SE Kelowna project is a combination of reducing the number of trees and brush resulting in reduced “ladder” and crown fuels, as well as implementing targeted grazing to reduce the fine fuels. Using livestock to reduce the fine fuels and an understanding of the forage supply (grass) within the area, an appropriate number of livestock can be applied. Fence construction to contain livestock with necessary access points for recreational use will be an important aspect of this project. The period of livestock use will be 2-4 weeks in the spring/summer depending on forage growth of any given year. Friends of South Slopes have been working with the Ministry of FLNRORD staff and the City of Kelowna to ensure that the interest of the community are addressed while meeting the objective of wildfire mitigation.

The planned timeline for the targeted grazing project includes:

2019 – summer and fall – forage analysis including species composition, volume and carry capacity development.

2019- fence layout to address recreational needs.

2020-fence and water development construction

2021 – June – initial livestock grazing for approximately 2-4 weeks

There will be many opportunities to engage for information during this process to address concerns or have questions answered.

https://fesbc.ca/pdf/wildfire_risk_mitigation_March_2019.pdf

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