



Friends of the South Slopes

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IMPORTANT NOTICE to FOSS Members and Friends!

Nearly two years ago FOSS notified its members regarding a **proposed ‘targeted grazing’ pilot project slated for the City of Kelowna Utility Property (formerly S.E.K.I.D.) and the two adjacent Crown Lots, above/south of the Gallagher’s Canyon community in Southeast Kelowna.** As part of a wildfire mitigation initiative, the BC Government provided funds to the BC Cattlemen’s Assoc., who, together with Kelowna City staff, have proposed investigating the use of grazing livestock to manage fine ground fuels (grasses and other tinder) following the tree harvesting/thinning - which is currently underway in this area.

For years FOSS held a Trail Use Agreement with S.E.K.I.D., managing and maintaining the trails here; the City, who now owns the Utility Property, has made it clear that they are now the managers and that there have been no trail or land use permits granted to FOSS. FOSS has requested that the Agreement be reinstated and has also made application to the Province for management of the trails in the adjoining Crown Lots.

FOSS has been doing its best to fully understand both the benefits and ramifications of the targeted grazing concept. We have met with Provincial, Regional and Municipal officials and staff regarding this over the past two years. An information meeting was held at the Gallagher’s Canyon Activity Centre on October 9th, 2019 but no additional public consultations have been held, nor have any firm updates been broadly communicated.

FOSS was recently invited by City staff to attend a Zoom meeting about this project and we have since received clarification regarding some of our questions, from Tara Bergeson, Urban Forestry Technician, City of Kelowna – see below. Please refer to the map that accompanied this information from the City; you will see the area impacted, where the fence line and gates will be, the type of gates, etc.

The Utility Property and Crown Lots, which FOSS refers to as the KMRA (KLO Creek Myra Recreation Area), have been ‘discovered’ during the pandemic – the area is now very widely shared by hikers, runners, bikers, horseback riders, dog-walkers – enjoying the many kilometers of trails, the viewpoints, and the outstanding natural landscape. In addition, the area provides excellent examples of the historic irrigation flumes and ditches which connect to the syphons, flumes, etc. found on the east side of KLO creek – all exceptional educational opportunities.

Friends of the South Slopes Society – BC Parks’ Volunteer Group of the Year (2014)

Working with partners to create a legacy of sustainable and accessible trails on the South Slopes

The KMRA is an integral link of the vast trail system of our South Slopes Green Belt, connecting the Mission Creek Greenway, and Scenic Canyon and KLO Creek Regional Parks, to Myra-Bellevue Provincial Park, the KVR and Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park/Naramata. FOSS continues to pursue the rezoning of the Utility Property as 'park' – envisioning this as an extension of KLO Creek Regional Park and anticipating that one day the adjoining Crown Lots could become part of this 'park' as well.

The 2040 draft Official Community Plan stresses the importance of parks and protecting natural areas, how “they build community....and are foundational to social wellbeing”. FOSS agrees. FOSS takes its role of stewardship of the South Slopes very seriously, fully committed and engaged - always striving to ensure access, working hard to maintain the trails as per our partnership agreements, collaborating with the different levels of government - always cognizant of the 'big picture' - seeking the ultimate in 'connectivity'....

Excerpts from Tara Bergeson's response to FOSS' questions regarding the proposed targeted grazing pilot:

1. Interaction between cattle and trail users
 - This will always be possible however we are taking every opportunity to minimize it. The project will use cow/calf pairings and not include bulls or known aggressive animals. Signage will be installed to inform trail users of their presence and to ensure dogs are kept on leash. Cattle will only be on site for a few weeks per year, during which trail users will have the option to stay outside of the area using alternative trails (see Item 5).
2. Cattle escaping from the fenced area.
 - Five strand fencing will be used, with no barbs on the top or bottom wire to reduce risk of injury to wildlife, dogs, or others. The fence will be monitored regularly by the owner of the cattle who also has a significant interest in them staying enclosed.
3. Gate placement with respect to existing trails.
 - Gates will be placed at the identified locations on the attached map.
4. Gate type and accessibility for multiple users.
 - Gates will be spring-loaded to prevent them accidentally being left open and will be accessible to people and horses. When options for gate types are narrowed down we may seek input from FOSS prior to making a final decision.
5. Trail location relative to the fence line.
 - The fence location has been laid out with consideration of the existing trail system. Where possible, it has been placed to allow for circumvention of the grazing area by users and includes a 20-30 metre buffer to further reduce the impact to users. Additionally, we will be installing moveable electric fencing to minimize the amount of time cattle are in the most used area in the powerline right-of-way. This affords an extra measure of protection against escaping cattle as well.
6. Motorized access to the area.
 - The City of Kelowna and FLNRORD are also interested in preventing motorized access and therefore have requested the narrowest right-of-way necessary for fencing.
7. Communication strategy for public awareness of project/active grazing times.
 - The City of Kelowna has a full Communications team that works regularly with the Parks Department for public notice of projects.
8. Monitoring efficacy of the project.
 - The City of Kelowna and FLNRORD will continue to work with the Cattlemen's Association to monitor the success of the pilot and if it is not meeting wildfire reduction targets then we will adapt or end the program.

FOSS is still seeking answers for you on the following:

- **Timeline:** In the proposal, *when* would **construction of fencing** begin? *When* would **livestock** first be introduced and *what period of time* each year?
- **Liability:** Cows on Gallagher's Canyon golf course and **private residential properties**;
- **Similar initiatives:** What are the results from research underway/completed in the targeted grazing **test sites in Cranbrook, Summerland and Peachland**? How might they compare: Size of the area; terrain; forage analysis; proximity to residential housing; traditional use of the area (recreational, rangeland); community acceptance, etc.

Please share this information with others/groups with whom you are involved.

Daphne Richard
Chair, KMRA Committee
Friends of the South Slopes Society

Attached: Map - Field Road Proposed Range Features

Field Road Proposed Range Features

