

# Friends of the South Slopes

## Fall 2011



*View from Upper Lost Lake Trail*

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## Brushing Projects in the Parks

As those of you who hike, cycle or ride the trails in Myra-Bellevue or Okanagan Mountain Parks know first hand, many of the trails are becoming obstructed by thick, dense underbrush. An equestrian riding on Lookout Trail reported that her riding partner, who was directly in front of her on the trail, 'disappeared' into the underbrush.

It seems that cuts to BC Parks' staff occur on an annual basis, leaving staff limited time for trail maintenance. A park ranger cleared most of Natasha Trail in MBPP this summer, but that was the only time allotted this year for brushing.

We'd like to give a shout-out to our volunteers who are devoting many, many hours to brushing trails. Ken Wiklund has put FOSS' new power brusher to good use by clearing Bullwinkle Trail and Brad Wright brushed Lost Lake Loop. Our Adopt-A-Trail folks do some brushing as well, but it's a almost impossible task to clear dense undergrowth with hand tools.

One FOSS member, Anne Mackay, recently made a donation that she allocated specifically to FOSS to hire a contractor to cut back the undergrowth along Fairlane Trail. In September FOSS hired a certified contractor for a full day of trail brushing. The project was completed with the help of two FOSS volunteer swamper.

This was such a successful project that an idea

sprang to life.....what if people donated to FOSS to get a favourite trail brushed? A \$250 donation 'buys' a day of brushing from a certified contractor. The donor chooses the trail, and FOSS provides the volunteer swamper to remove the clippings from the trail tread. Donors receive a tax receipt. Doesn't this sound like a win-win proposition?

***Attention! Dog walkers, hikers, mountain bikers, equestrians, runners and nature lovers! Looking for a gift for a fellow outdoorsman? Why not have their favourite trail brushed in either Myra-Bellevue or Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park? Donate to FOSS, tell us which trail you want cleared, and you'll be giving a one-of-a-kind, unique gift. See page 5 of this newsletter for more information.***



*This bird house is tucked away in KLO Creek Regional Park*



# KLO (Canyon) Creek Syphon by Teresa MacKenzie

After many years of passing under the big black pipe that looms overhead on the KLO Creek Regional Park trail I finally decided to find out what it was all about. I started with the book *Paying for Rain: A History of the South East Kelowna Irrigation District* by Jay Ruzesky & Tom Carter but I didn't find any reference to KLO Creek. When I finally resorted to crosschecking my maps with those in the book I realized that KLO Creek was called Canyon Creek in the early history of the Okanagan Valley.

The semi-arid desert of South East Kelowna became suitable cattle range when an earth and rock irrigation ditch was built from Canyon Creek to the Lequime family ranch to provide water for cattle and grasslands. As the demand for land in the Okanagan Valley increased the land developers realized the valley's potential. They attempted to purchase the most desirable rangeland for subdivision into smaller plots for fruit growing. This in turn created a need for an irrigation system to make the land suitable for orchards.

In South East Kelowna it was Ted Carruthers who recognized the possibilities of the area. After numerous hikes in Canyon Creek canyon he determined a line where an intake could be located at a point up the creek, and then run along the steep hillside beyond the canyon and come out above the rangeland. This line could provide gravity-fed water to the area.

Carruthers joined forces with Bob Pooley and T.W. Stirling to form the Kelowna Land Orchard Company (KLO) in 1904. To increase the value of the land that they had purchased, an expensive irrigation system was necessary. Water was drawn from Canyon Creek through a wooden flume and carried to the KLO bench lands through an open ditch.

As the bench lands became more populated it

was soon apparent that Canyon Creek could not supply sufficient water to satisfy all the new settlers. In 1908 the South Kelowna Land Company (SKL) was formed to finance the construction of storage dams and a distribution system. A storage dam was completed by 1913 at their reservoir site at McCulloch on Hydraulic Lake. A 4.5 mile-long concrete lined canal, a syphon (the big black pipe) across Canyon Creek, and a distribution system of pipes and flumes carried the water to the benches.

As you are standing at the point on the KLO Creek (Canyon Creek) trail where the syphon passes overhead, look up the hillsides of the canyon. The water would come from the storage dam near McCulloch in the east, and because the dam was higher than the bench lands on the west side of the canyon, the water was able to travel down into the canyon and up the other side. It works well as long as the vacuum in the pipe is maintained.

The SKL ditch and syphon were in use until 1970. The engineers who designed the system and the men who built it must be recognized for their efforts. The ditch was built through rock and dense forest. The syphon runs from the ditch, across Canyon Creek canyon at grades up to 100%. Timber, steel pipe, and material for concrete was transported by horses and wagons from Kelowna, which was twenty miles away.

Photo Credit: Teresa MacKenzie





The KLO and SKL companies struggled to survive as the First World War slowed land sales. As sales dropped off the companies were left with little means to operate the expensive irrigation systems they had promised to maintain.

In 1920 water users in South East Kelowna formed the South East Kelowna Irrigation District (SEKID). The system was falling into disrepair and was inadequate to meet increased demands. Domestic water distribution became a high priority for SEKID. The necessary work to meet this demand included a new intake higher up on Canyon Creek and a larger distribution system.

The mid 1920s were devoted to intense maintenance and rebuilding of old distribution systems. The constant quest to augment their water supply included lowering Haynes and Minnow Lake and draining Fish Lake – a move that would make present day environmentalists shudder.

Financial and water troubles intensified in the late 1920s and early 30s as drought conditions settled into the valley. Other problems also plagued the system. In June 1929 the steel syphon across Canyon Creek collapsed leaving South Kelowna without water for three weeks. A leak had undermined a concrete anchor block allowing it to shift, pulling the pipe apart. The water draining from the syphon created a vacuum that flattened the thick steel. Crews worked 20 hour-days to repair the syphon.

Idabel Lake was pumped dry in 1930 to provide water to South East Kelowna and because of a

low snow pack it did not re-fill in the spring. The water shortage persisted. Mission Creek became the only feasible alternative for a new water supply. The main intake was located 1400 feet above Mission Creek Falls. On a system of trestles the water was piped from there over the falls, along a steep hillside in metal flumes and high above Hydraulic Creek Canyon through a syphon. Before reaching discharge the water was transferred into a 20 inch wooden stave syphon across Canyon Creek canyon and from this discharge point the water was fed into the distribution system through a concrete ditch. The Mission Creek system was in use until 1948.

Weather conditions improved after 1932 and finally the growers could concentrate on their orchards rather than water problems. In the late 1940s sprinklers and pressurized systems made an appearance. The shift to sprinklers was slow because water was conveyed via open ditches, canals and flumes. Gradually the open system became pressurized completely by 1974.

The 1960s and 1970s brought dramatic changes with the need for more line pressure, increased maintenance of a 50 year old system, and finally the government recognizing the need to help small farmers. Rehabilitation of the system started in 1970 and included an increased water supply so more land could be irrigated and an increase in domestic water supply.

Not everyone was able to get domestic water or irrigation rights for previously non-irrigated land by the late 1970s because there just wasn't enough

water. In 1979 groundwater was considered as a potential source of water. Two high capacity deep wells were drilled on the East Kelowna bench and were among the largest and deepest in BC at the time. Increasing population, the building of golf courses, and logging in the watershed continue to tax the system.

*Paying for Rain* was a fascinating book, full of wonderful photos and interesting facts. It is also an excellent resource as we cope with the prevalent 'myth of abundance' regarding water in the Okanagan Valley.

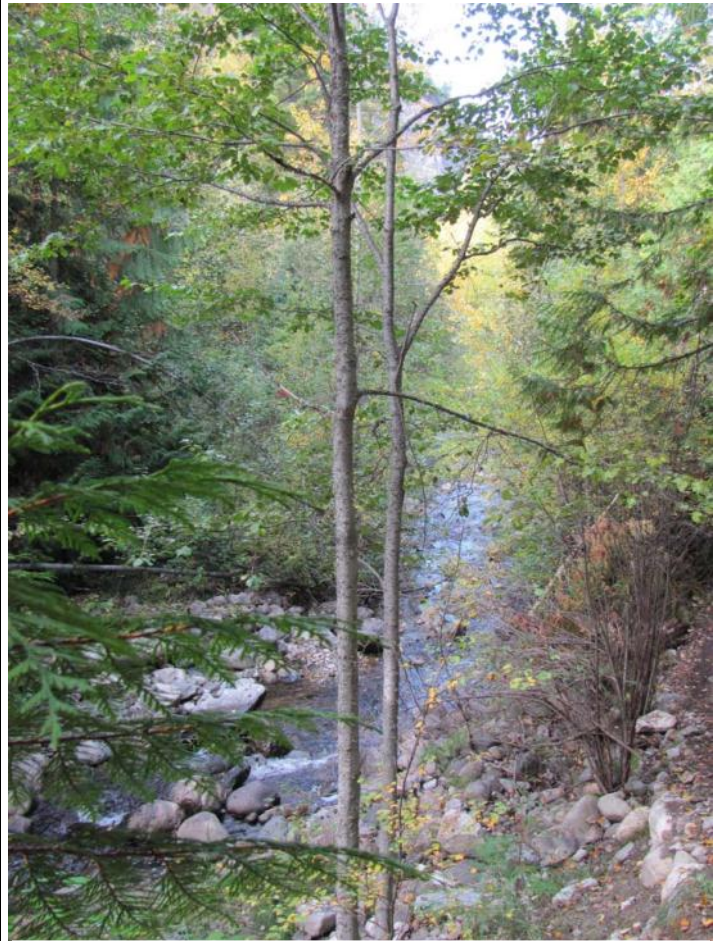


Photo Credit: Teresa MacKenzie





↩ **Volunteers from the Kelowna Outdoor Adventure Group assist FOSS to install some new sign posts.**



**(Above) KLO Creek Trail, October 2011**

## **Priest Creek Trail Re-Opens**

Late spring flooding washed out a short section of Priest Creek Trail resulting in the closure of the park by the City of Kelowna. Staff from the city's Parks Department met on site with FOSS to develop a plan to repair the damage. In early August, FOSS volunteers constructed a new trail around the washout. Once this was completed, city staff spread gravel on the new section of trail, decommissioned the damaged trail, cleaned up the park entrance at Balldock Road, and re-installed the Priest Creek Linear Park trail sign. The city re-opened Priest Creek Linear Park just in time for an August 20th "Discover Nature" hike organized by Brenda Thomson of the Central Okanagan Naturalists. This hike was part of CONC's 50th anniversary celebrations.

**One of the FOSS volunteers working on Priest Creek Trail  
Photo Credit: Debbie Recsky**





# The Back Page....



**Night Hawk**  
**Photo Credit: Bill Emigh**

**FortisBC Donates to FOSS!** FortisBC's 'Give Where You Live' program supports employees in their home community. Recently FortisBC donated \$300 to FOSS on behalf an employee who is an active volunteer.

This donation will facilitate getting another trail 'brushed' - possibly Lookout Trail in MBPP. When you see that a trail has been cleared or brushed, please take a moment to think about the people who made this possible, either through donations to FOSS to hire a contractor or the volunteers from FOSS, MTBco, equestrian and running groups, and all those other unsung volunteers who maintain the trails.



**Equestrian on Myra Bailout Trail, MBPP**

## **Donation Voucher—FOSS' Trail Brushing Projects (Myra-Bellevue & Ok. Mtn Parks)**

Please complete this form and mail it to: Friends of the South Slopes Society  
Box 28011, RPO East Kelowna, Kelowna, BC V1W 4A6

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: (In case we need to contact you directly) \_\_\_\_\_

Donation: \_\_\_\_\_ (\$250 buys one day of 'brushing' - donations of \$25/\$50/\$100/\$150 will be pooled. FOSS will hire a certified contractor and provide volunteers)

Name of the trail I wish to have brushed: \_\_\_\_\_ Second choice \_\_\_\_\_

Location of trail Myra-Bellevue Provincial Park ☐ Okanagan Mtn. Provincial Park ☐

If you wish to 'gift' the trail to someone else, please provide the following information and we will send them a card:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

(Please make cheques payable to the Friends of the South Slopes Society. A tax receipt will be mailed to you)