

Friends of the South Slopes

June 2021



April 2021—Sunset from lower Crawford Trail (Photo credit: Ellis)

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June 5th FOSS Celebrated BC Trails Day

On Saturday, June 5th, FOSS joined the Outdoor Recreation Council of BC in celebrating BC's trail system.

FOSS Directors set up information tables at four locations—Stewart Rd. East Trailhead in Myra-Bellevue, the north parking lot in Okanagan Mtn. Provincial Park, KMRA Trails (south end of Field Rd.) and KLO Creek Regional Park. Volunteers shared FOSS' vision of a *South Slopes Greenbelt* — pathways & trails connecting the Okanagan Rail Trail in Kelowna through to Okanagan Mtn. Provincial Park & Naramata. Directors will host another 'Meet & Greet' this summer.



KLO Creek Regional Park



SRE Trailhead, Myra-Bellevue Provincial Park



Okanagan Mtn. Provincial Park

TRAIL MAINTENANCE REPORT April—May, 2021

Milt Stevenson, Chair, Trail Maintenance Committee

APRIL was a busy month for trail maintenance from an organizational perspective. Back in 2020, FOSS expanded its equipment and trail crew team, clearing 29 km of primarily major arteries in Myra-Bellevue Park. This involved significant individual hours for 6 or 7 people.

My objective this year is to expand the crew to spread the load and expand the work. Once we are finished orientation, there will be 20 new trail volunteers available. Experienced leaders will work with new crew members, dramatically expanding our capacity.

Upcoming work includes:

- Further widening of trails to the 3 meter Park standard.
- Focusing on trail erosion and trail drainage.
- Finishing work on the major arteries.
- Moving the 2 bridges in the Priest Creek Linear Park by helicopter, relocating them to MBPP.
- Possibly working on the north end of Okanagan Mountain Park, depending on improvements to access at the Golden Mile.
- Integrating trail maintenance with Adopt A Trail groups. This is lead by Alan Milnes and Penny Gubbels.

Ongoing work from Herb Blamire has been crucial to the expansion of our group. His skill set has allowed FOSS to purchase and use new equipment (and fix it) to improve efficiency. Herb and Jane have plans to move the South Okanagan in the future. We will miss both of them. Herb will be working with Eric Chamberland, training Eric to take over his job. THANKS HERB!

We met with COSAR and Geoff Popowich from BC Parks. COSAR will tour some of the arteries and the helipad. Geoff will be looking at the Priest Creek bridges and some other issues.

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Improvements to Lost Lake Tr. S. of Teddy Bear



For lots more photos of FOSS' Trail Maintenance volunteers at work this spring, please check out FOSS' Facebook page—albums. Thank you to Eric Chamberland, Milt Stevenson & Alan Milnes for photos contributed.

....April/May Trail Report, continued

On May 20th, FOSS directors Sandy Hilton, Alan Milnes and Milt Stevenson met with Jonathan (BC Parks' Area Supervisor, East Okanagan) and Geoff Popowich (Sr. Park Ranger, East Okanagan). Discussion focused on a number of items, mostly focused on new funding available for this fiscal year (ending March 31, 2022) for Myra-Bellevue and Okanagan Mtn. Provincial Parks. More information on this will be available in early July, so FOSS hopes to share details in our next newsletter. Projects being discussed by BC Parks for this additional funding include: trestle repairs and expansion of the Myra Forest Service Road parking lot & pit toilets; improvements to the Stewart Rd. East Trailhead parking lot, including paving; relocation of two bridges in Priest Creek Park (this funding has been secured, and FOSS will submit a detailed plan/budget to BC Parks); a new gate at 1st bend in the SRE Trailhead roadway, and upgrades to the Canyon Lakes back country campsite and work to make this site walk-in only.

Other proposed upgrades by BC Parks include:

- Trail counters at both parks
- Removal of wrecks dumped in MBPP near Priest Creek/Hromek
- New bridge at Pooley Creek (part of Myra Canyon upgrades)
- New signage for Okanagan Mtn. & Myra-Bellevue Provincial Parks
- Upgrades to Commando Bay & Buchan Bay campsites (Okanagan Mtn. Prov. Park)

In addition to these projects, Sandy, Alan and Milt talked with Jonathan and Geoff about Wildhorse Canyon Trail. BC Parks will have a wildfire crew working in from the South Parking lot. How much gets done is dependent on the fire season. Four days of a Junior Ranger Crew has been obtained. Their focus will be on the Goodes Creek Trail in the south of OMPP. An application is in to the BC Forest Employment Plan for use of a crew on Wildhorse Canyon Trail, and hopefully Jonathan is successful in obtaining this.

Jonathan was receptive to FOSS' plans to camp at Buchan Bay in October and do a good brushing of Wildhorse Canyon Trail. Approval of the land acquisition at the Golden Mile is almost complete from a management point of view—great news from FOSS' perspective as it means the improvements can be made at the Golden Mile/Lakeshore Rd. junction, and FOSS can then access the north end of the Wild Horse Canyon trail and do some much needed brushing.



May 3, 2021—Wildhorse Canyon Trail, OMPP (Alan Milnes)



May 23, 2021 Sticky Current & Calypso Orchids, Outhouse Tr. (MBPP) (Milnes)

KLO Creek Myra Recreation Area (KMRA) Update

FOSS continues to work for the overall connectivity of the South Slopes – this is why we are passionate about what happens in the KMRA which is such an integral part of the South Slopes Green Belt. Recent involvement has related to the proposed targeted grazing pilot project for the City Utility Property and adjacent Crown Lots south of Field Road. As you may know, this is part of the wildfire risk reduction initiative in the area, where timber harvesting activities are nearing completion – the remaining slash piles on the Crown Lots will be chipped and removed this week, and trails rehabilitated.

Community Petition:

The community organizers of the petition opposing the targeted grazing proposal for the City Utility Property and Crown Lots south of Field Road want to acknowledge the 857 people who signed it. “Thanks to all of you, we know we have support to continue our efforts to meet the City of Kelowna Mayor and Council, BC Cattlemen's Association and the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations



and Rural Development (FLNRORD). Your signatures and comments have demonstrated that the community has many concerns.”

In addition to/in conjunction with community action:

FOSS sent information to the Kelowna Mayor and Councillors, inviting them to an onsite visit, and FOSS also contacted all government personnel (Provincial, regional, municipal) with whom FOSS has previously discussed our South Slopes Green Belt vision;

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Check out the albums on FOSS' Facebook page for some incredible photos taken this spring of flora & fauna. A special thank you to FOSS Director Alan Milnes who not only takes beautiful photos, but he also identifies the flowers and plants for us!

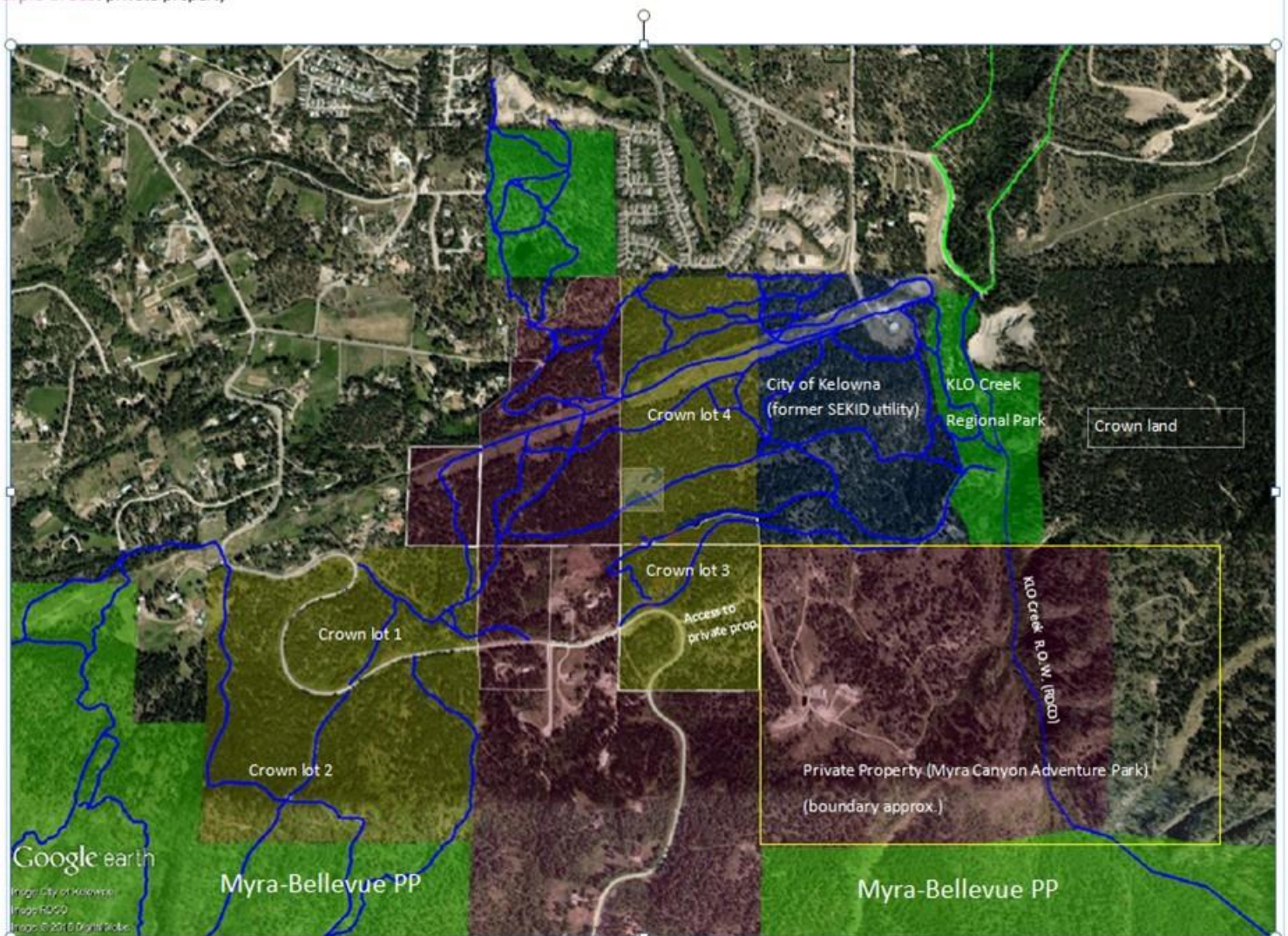
....KMRA Report, continued

- Field Road and Gallagher's Canyon residents wrote individually to the Mayor and Councillors to express their concerns.
- Notice was sent out to other organizations/stakeholders/neighbourhood FB pages, etc., with many 'shares' and many comments – the vast majority had no idea about this proposal.
- Last month members of FOSS' KMRA Committee met with the rancher who is involved with the project at Field Rd., and FOSS had an opportunity to share our concerns and our understandings about what was being considered: type/location of fencing and gates, length of time/when cattle would be in the area; neighbourhood involvement with monitoring fences and cattle; concerns about vandalism and liability.
- FOSS is pleased to be participating in the OCCP (Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program), as the KMRA is an integral part of the continuous habitat connectivity corridor envisaged, stretching from Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park all the way to Kalamalka Provincial Park. A recent meeting focused on possible acquisition of private properties within the proposed corridor - perhaps a consideration/possibility for the KMRA.

Map—KMRA Trails

Blue lines: Existing trails located on Crown land, Private property, Regional Park, City of Kelowna (Former SEKID utility) and Myra-Bellevue PP.

Purple areas: private property



Update from FLNRORD on Proposed Targeted Grazing project (south of Field Rd.)

The latest update FOSS has is from Gerry MacDougall, Regional Executive Director, Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development.

Mr. MacDougall responded to FOSS' letter of April 26, 2021—addressing questions raised. He reviewed the Ministry's fuel mitigation project in South East Kelowna (through the Forest Enhancement Society of BC), where selected forest sites within Myra-Bellevue Provincial Park and Crown land in the June Springs Gallagher's Canyon areas. FOSS has fully supported this mitigation project.

Mr. MacDougall reiterates that Ministry agreed to utilize the former SEKID utility site (now under City of Kelowna ownership) and the adjoining Crown land, for a targeted pilot that will use grazing cattle to try and keep the fine-ground fuels (dry grasses) in check.

He advised FOSS:

- Fencing will be erected in the fall of 2021
- Grazing will commence in the spring of 2022
- Cattle will be onsite for approximately three weeks per year
- Ministry staff, the range tenure holder and the BC Cattlemen's Association will monitor the project
- Public access will not be restricted
- Spring-loaded gates will be used to keep cattle in while facilitating access to the public
- Trail users will have the option to stay outside the area using alternative trails
- Fencing will be constructed to ministry standards, which include wildlife mitigation measures such as smooth wire on the top & bottom strands, with sufficient space between the bottom strand and the ground to allow access for smaller ungulates (e.g. deer fawns)

On June 21st, FOSS' KMRA Committee will attend a field visit regarding the SE Kelowna Targeted Grazing Project. Andrew Hunsberger & Tara Bergeson (City of Kelowna) are arranging this site visit which will include representatives of Ministry of Forests Lands and Natural Resource Operations & Rural Development, the local rancher involved in the project and a few representatives from the community.

*Siphon on Crown Land east of KLO
Cr. Regional Park*

Looking ahead.....

FOSS anticipates hearing from the RDCO in the near future regarding their efforts to acquire easements through private property in the KMRA, which will provide significant, continuous access to/through the Crown Lots to Myra-Bellevue Provincial Park –the Get Back Trail. FOSS continues to put forth its vision of having the City Utility Property be incorporated into the KLO Creek Regional Park.

And closely related to this, FOSS awaits word from the Ministry (FLNRORD) regarding its application for a Section 57, requesting a trail use/management agreement for the two Crown Lots immediately west of the Utility Property – those lots that are part of the targeted grazing proposal. Also, BC Parks, on behalf of FOSS, has made a land tenure application for the other two Crown Lots in the area to have them become part of Myra-Bellevue Provincial Park.



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