

Friends of the South Slopes

October 2023

Bellevue Access Trail



Box 28011 RPO East Kelowna, Kelowna BC V1W 4A6

<http://www.foss-kelowna.org>

info@foss-kelowna.org

We acknowledge that our community is located on the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the Syilx/Okanagan people

déjà vu All Over Again: The 2023 McDougall Creek Fire

When FOSS circulated its 'Special Edition' Newsletter in August, where we looked back at the August 16, 2003 Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park wildfire, we could not have imagined that on August 15, 2023 another wildfire would break out northwest of West Kelowna. On the night of August 17, high winds and extreme drought conditions caused this blaze to explode into a firestorm that sent embers across Okanagan Lake, igniting new wildfires north of the City of Kelowna and in Lake Country. Evacuation orders and alerts were issued on both sides of the lake. On Aug. 18, flights were suspended at Kelowna International Airport, and the Province declared a state of emergency and soon after restricted non essential travel. Officials reported that approximately 180 structures were lost or damaged in the fire, including some properties on the east side of Okanagan Lake.

The community of Trader's Cove, Lake Okanagan Resort and rural and residential properties along Westside Road and Bear Creek Rd. as well as in Rose Valley and West Kelowna Estates were among the areas impacted by the fire.

FOSS' thoughts are with the people who have lost their homes, farms and in some cases their livelihoods. A BIG thankyou to the BC Wildfire wildland firefighters, the structural firefighters, RCMP and all the first responders and volunteers whose heroic efforts saved many properties and assisted the people who were evacuated and who lost their homes.

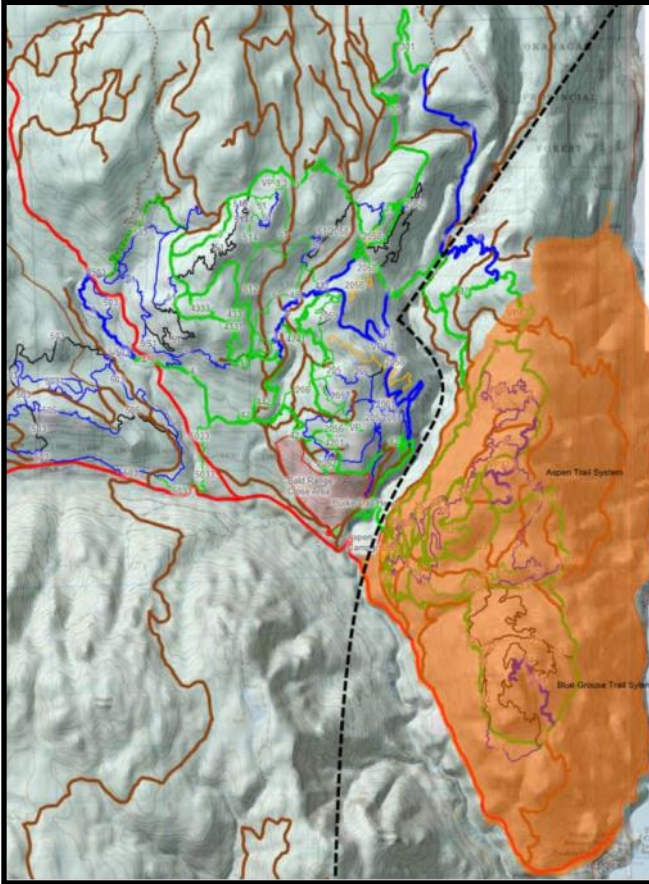


*Aug 17, 2023 —View of the McDougall Creek Wildfire
The photo was taken from Wilden by FOSS member Keith Recsky*

As with the 2003 Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park forest fire, the 2023 McDougall Creek fire impacted many popular recreational areas.

Bear Creek Off-Highway Vehicle Trail System (OHV): This 85,000 acre BC Recreation Sites & Trails area is a designated riding area for motorcycles & quads. It was purpose-built by the Okanagan Trail Riders Association (OTRA) who are the site operators. There are 350 km of trails and features.

The McDougall Creek wildfire burned through the eastern section of the Bear Creek OHV trail system, impacting many of their trails. However, some good news was shared on the OTRA Facebook page—they were allowed in to retrieve their equipment, and all of it survived the fire. Their trails north of Burke and Bald Range appear to be intact. Trails affected by the Grouse Complex Fire (name given the multiple fires in the region) are identified in orange on the map provided by OTRA. If you are an OHV rider, follow the OTRA Facebook page for up to date information on the trails.



An interesting fact about the OTRA is that following the 2003 Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park wildfire, FOSS contracted with them in 2009, 2010 and 2012 and hired their SWACO Track Trail machine and its operator to do some major trail repairs and erosion mitigation in Myra-Bellevue Provincial Park. Here they are working on Pink Hwy.



Smith Creek Trail System: The West Kelowna Trail Crew and Sovereign Cycle announced that these trails reopened in mid September. Since 2021, the West Kelowna Trail Crew has held a 'Section 56' with BC Recreation Sites and Trails, which authorizes them to manage and maintain the trails. You can check them out on their Facebook page.

Rose Valley Recreational Trails:

At the time of publishing this newsletter, these trails remain closed.

For current information on trail closures on the Westside, check the West Kelowna Trail Crew Facebook page

A number of other parks managed by the Regional District of Central Okanagan remain closed. Check the RDCO website for the most up to date information.

FOSS Trail Maintenance Update: (If you want more details on FOSS trail projects, and to see photos of them, check out FOSS' Facebook page! It's your most up-to-date source of information on FOSS)

With unprecedented heat, drought, wildfires and smoke this past summer, some of FOSS' trail maintenance projects were delayed until cooler temperatures returned. However, there was plenty of work done in the summer and early fall. Here are some highlights of projects undertaken by FOSS' enthusiastic Trail Maintenance Crew, under the direction of FOSS Director Milt Stevenson:

Myra Canyon/Kettle Valley RailTrail/(KVR) On August 4th, Rick Ellery, Don Spring, Milt Stevenson and Alan Milnes were up on the KVR through Myra Canyon, erecting signs, trimming branches and removing debris from the trail surface throughout the entire Myra Canyon portion of the trail bed. The trail is in superb condition.

On Sept. 5, ten FOSS Trail Maintenance crew members did a cleanup of the Morrissey Camp site, near the 2nd parking lot (Ruth Station) east of Little White Forest Service Road. Prior to starting the project, Dr. Maury Williams toured the camp with the volunteers to give them an idea on what the camp had looked like back when it was used during the construction of the KVR. Signs were erected, branches trimmed and debris removed from the trail surface throughout the entire Myra Canyon section of the trail bed. The trail is in excellent condition.



Race Classic/Earring Trail Project—The scope of the project and the purpose for it were detailed in FOSS' June newsletter. Throughout July, a number of work parties engaged in trail reconstruction, working in tandem with FOSS' contractor, Contour Trails. Modifications were completed on Race Classic Trail, west of Flamingo Flats over to Crawford Trail. Significant water mitigation features were incorporated and a French drain was constructed on the steep hill just below the Hillbilly/Race Classic Junction. A new section of trail was built at the south end of Earring Trail, that provides a 'blue' down trail. Additionally, a short climb trail up (Earring Connector) from the Race Classic/Crawford DH Trail to Earring Trail will allow an easy flow onto Earring and onwards to the new section of downhill trail.

The project wrapped up on July 25th, when the final 250 meter section of Race Classic closest to Flamingo Flats was constructed, recreating a single track trail bed. A huge shoutout to Contour Trails and its owner, Cameron Sorenson and to all the FOSS volunteers who participated—often starting at 5 am. Everyone endured



high temperatures and dry conditions, but at the end of the day — they were still smiling. Congratulations to the crew.

Bullwinkle Trail: Sept. 22, FOSS hosted over a dozen FortisBC staff members who picked up shovels and helped with a trail improvement project on Bullwinkle Trail. As part of FortisBC's annual volunteer program, the team pitched in to replace an old, unsafe bridge at the foot of Bullwinkle Trail with a culvert. FOSS volunteers worked along side the FortisBC volunteers, and Carol Suhan, Manager/Community Programs wrote: "You and the FOSS team were so organized – and the work you do is so valuable to our community. It was rewarding for us to help out, even for just a little bit."

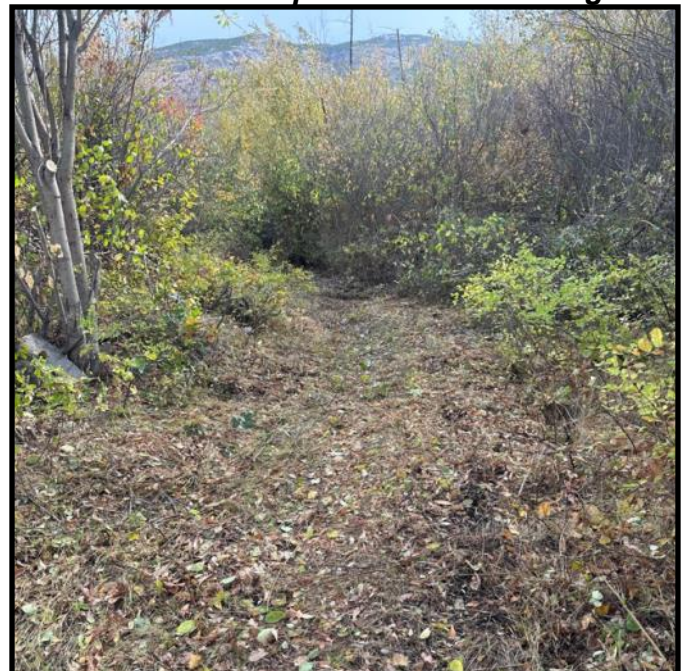


Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park Last year, FOSS spent hundreds of volunteer hours and FOSS resources to clear and improve Wild Horse Canyon Trail, CN Trail and the start of Goode's Basin Trail. This fall, FOSS' Trail Maintenance Crew completed a two week project in OMPP, tackling the Goode's Basin Trail which was so overgrown that you could barely find the trail. This project took brushing to an entirely new level! Additionally, parts of Wildhorse Canyon Trail were re-brushed and 1 km of the Rim Trail was cleared.

These are just a few of the many, many trail projects undertaken so far in 2023. Thank you to Alan Milnes, Hugh Culver & Milt Stevenson for all the photos they've provided this summer and fall. Lots more to see on FOSS' Facebook page!



A section of Goode's Basin Trail, Before & After the FOSS Trail Crew performed their magic!



BC Parks Foundation Announces Land Acquisition for Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park

Kudos to the BC Parks Foundation [Home | BC Parks Foundation](#) and all the people who supported their fund raising efforts for the acquisition of additional lakeshore property for Okanagan Mtn Provincial Park. FOSS was not involved in this acquisition, but we are very grateful to the groups and individuals who made this happen. **Thank you!**

In a press release earlier this year, the BC Parks Foundation said that funding was secured and the property will be protected. Wildlife and threatened species in the area will have a home free from disturbance and people will be able to enjoy the viewscape and health/recreational benefits - forever.

The crowdfunding target was reached and protected all 151.7 acres of remarkably beautiful and ecological significance habitat. This property is surrounded by Okanagan Mountain Park, and holds a cherished place in the heart of British Columbia's interior.



The purchase helps support and kick off a larger campaign by the Okanagan Nation Alliance and the Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program to create a wildlife corridor that runs 65 kilometers to Kalamalka Lake Provincial Park. That is part of a larger vision to continue a corridor down into Washington State.

Dixon Terbasket is the Cultural Coordinator with the Okanagan Nation Alliance. He sees the corridor

and the protection of lands in it as essential to survival. "If we block the animals...we're slowly going to peter out the numbers, the numbers are going to decrease, and we're not going to have any more."

The Okanagan is home to one of the most vulnerable ecosystems in Canada, with a significant concentration of threatened species.

Butterflies, turtles, badgers, and dragonflies are only a fraction of the 150+ species who will all have a better chance at long term survival with this land protected and the corridor expanded.

"The park protects a whole host of species at risk" says local resident and University of British Columbia Okanagan Professor Emeritus Dr. Ian Walker. "There are elk and mountain goats and bighorn sheep down in the park, as well as cougars and bears. Golden eagles are known to nest in the park. And you just go on and on."

Scott Boswell, Program Manager at Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program, emphasizes, "This property is one of the key remaining private properties left along Okanagan Lake. Studies over the last 16 years have shown a steady decline of natural areas around the lake. With continued development, we would see the loss of all natural areas around the lake within a generation or two. Protecting this property is so important for the entire region because it is one of the large fragments that we need to include into the park and to the connectivity to the other parks in the region as well."

This lakeshore acquisition to Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park is the 2nd addition to the Park in recent years.

The Golden Mile Trail: In 2020, as part of a rezoning and subdivision process for a property at the south end of Lakeshore road, the Strachan family donated a strategic parcel of land (21.2 hectares) to BC Parks. The land was valued at over \$1,000,000, and provides a buffer between the park and the adjacent residential subdivision. The 'Golden Mile' is one of the two access points from Lakeshore Rd. into Okanagan Mtn. Provincial Park.

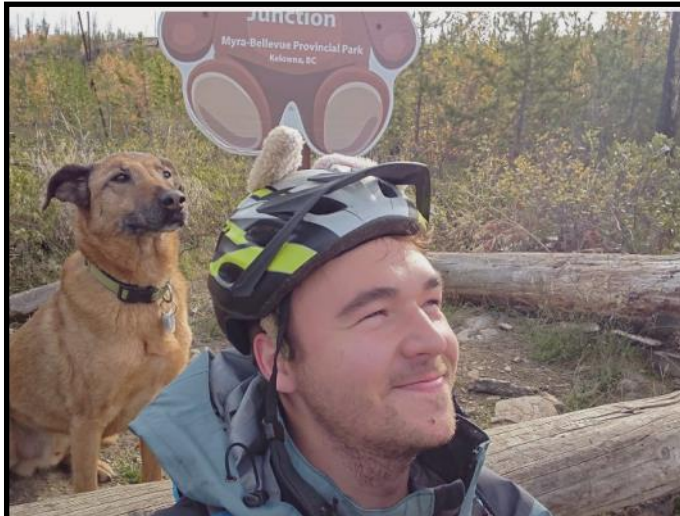
FOSS' Strategic Relations Committee continues to work with partners such as the Central Okanagan Land Trust (COLT), Regional District of Central Okanagan, City of Kelowna and the Province to secure more areas for public recreation and better access and connectivity to existing trail networks.



New Additions to FOSS' Board of Directors

FOSS held its Annual General Meeting on March 29, 2023 and the following people were elected to the Board of Directors: Cam Kourany (Chair), Rick Ellery, Brad Wright, Sandy Hilton (Treasurer), Milt Stevenson, Alan Milnes, Sharon Shepherd (Vice Chair) and Paula Levens. You can learn more about our Board by visiting the FOSS website: www.foss-kelowna.org

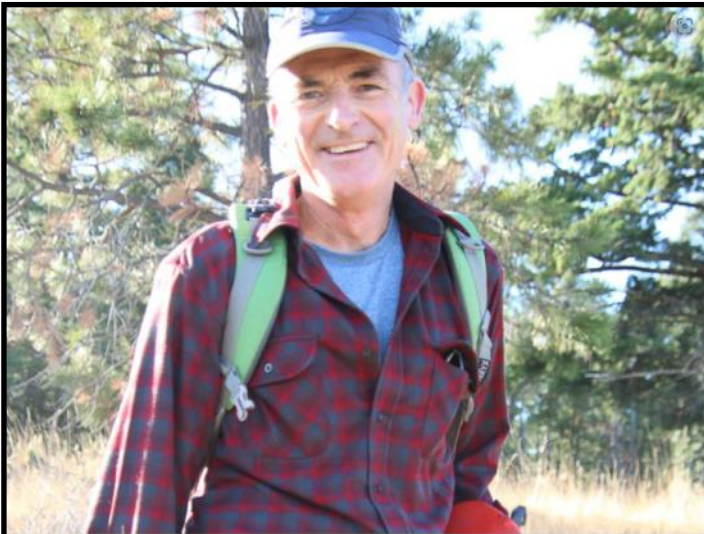
Subsequent to the AGM, the FOSS Board has appointed 3 new directors, Logan Pay, Hugh Culver & Steve Hall (FOSS Secretary). Here are their bios:



“

I have spent a great many hours in the parks that ring the South of Kelowna. We have unfettered access to world-class hiking and biking trails borne from the volunteering efforts of some real upstanding people. I hope to help maintain these parks into the future and preserve the history and spirit of the community that has been in these hills for so many years.

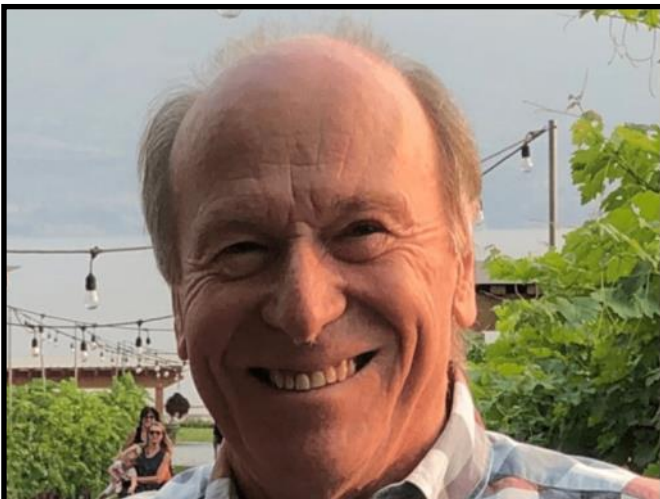
Logan Pay
DIRECTOR



“

For over 30 years I've been hiking and running the trails FOSS cares for. It feels great to give back to an area that has given me so much over the years. I'm inspired by the challenges FOSS takes on and the spirit of the volunteers who contribute so much time and effort to make the trails great for everyone.

Hugh Culver
DIRECTOR



“

With my wife Lynn, I moved to Kelowna full time 3 years ago from Kingston Ontario to be closer to family and a ski lift. I was a road rider in Ontario, but little did I know that I would morph into a mountain biker who would spend many hours every week in Myra Bellevue Park. One day last year I asked "who maintains these trails for the lucky users ?" A few months later I asked "Can I help ?" I recently joined the board – a group of volunteers committed to maintaining trails and access as well as advocating on behalf all users of Myra Bellevue Park, Okanagan Mtn Park and the KVR.

Steve Hall
DIRECTOR