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

FOSS Celebrates the Acquisition of a New Protected Area!

In FOSS' December newsletter, we wrote about FOSS' Strategic Relations Committee (SRC) - which is tasked with working collaboratively with the City of Kelowna, the Regional District of Central Okanagan and the Province of BC to acquire new parkland, protected areas and access on Kelowna's South Slopes.

We are delighted to share with you that on Dec. 23, 2025 the BC Parks Foundation (BCPF) purchased a 158-acre private property on the east side of Little White Forest Service Road, north of the Kettle Valley Rail Trail.

The back story of this acquisition is that in early 2025, FOSS' Strategic Relations Committee (Rick Ellery, Daphne Richard and Penny Gubbels) submitted a proposal to the BCPF with a ***“Recommendation to BC Parks for Acquisition of Property to Expand and Enhance Myra-Bellevue Provincial Park”***. This submission was very well received by staff at the BC Parks Foundation, and a positive dialogue with FOSS was established. When one of the properties of interest came onto the market in the summer of 2025, Rick contacted the BCPF to update them on its availability and to reiterate FOSS' belief that this would be a valuable property for acquisition. The BCPF conducted an appraisal of the land and



made an offer to purchase which was accepted by the sellers. FOSS is thrilled to announce that the BCPF made its formal announcement on Feb. 5, 2026. Excerpts from their press release follows. This property now falls under BCPF 'protected' status. Once a land management plan is in place, more information will be shared with you.

FOSS wishes to thank the BC Parks Foundation for recognizing the recreational and conservation values of this special property and for supporting FOSS' overall vision for the South Slopes. FOSS is also extremely grateful to the Bauer family, who sold this property to the BCPF and have expressed their pleasure in having this much-loved land now protected in perpetuity.

BC Parks Foundation Press Release, Feb. 5, 2026 - Here are excerpts from the press release - there are additional photos and information at: [Press room | BC Parks Foundation](#). If the Myra-Bellevue announcement isn't yet posted on the BCPF home page, scroll down to 'Press Releases', choose "all" and you'll see it identified as "Protecting Beautiful Places".

Generations of nature lovers protect key property within Myra–Bellevue Park

Local conservationists, landowners, and BC Parks Foundation supporters secure a missing puzzle piece within the park.

A 158-acre private land inholding within [Myra–Bellevue Park](#) has been permanently protected, strengthening an important wildlife corridor in the Okanagan and helping safeguard the ecological integrity of the park.



"Conserving land like this is about protecting what people and wildlife rely on every day," says Andy Day, CEO of [BC Parks Foundation](#). "It's about making sure no puzzle piece is missing so the full picture of the park can be whole and enjoyed over time. As always, I am very grateful to our local partners and all our supporters, including the [Wilson 5 Foundation](#) and Cynthia and Paul Rodgers, for their support."

Support also came from [Environment and Climate Change Canada's Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund](#), with the combined effort of all partners helping make this project possible.

The forested property—home to streams, wetlands, and ponds—escaped the devastating 2003 Okanagan Mountain wildfire, leaving it as an intact refuge for wildlife in a region still recovering from fire. The land supports abundant species including deer, elk, moose, bear, cougar, and lynx, and provides critical habitat for the American badger, a species at risk.

The acquisition reinforces long-standing conservation efforts in the Kelowna South Slopes and helps connect protected lands across the region, while also supporting a park that is deeply woven into daily life in the Okanagan.

"This property has always been incredibly valuable from a conservation perspective," says Rick Ellery of [Friends of the South Slopes](#). "It wasn't affected by the 2003 fire, it sits beside a major conservation corridor through the Okanagan, and it protects habitat that large mammals depend on. Opportunities like this don't come up often, and when they do, it's important to act."

Myra–Bellevue Park is used year-round by people seeking connection to nature, whether hiking, cycling, horseback riding, wildlife watching, or simply spending time outdoors close to home. During the pandemic, use of the park surged as people turned to nearby nature for relief, reflection, and wellbeing, and that connection has only continued to grow.

The land was stewarded for nearly three decades by the Bauer family, who immigrated to Canada from Germany in the early 1980s. For Karin Bauer and her family, the property, affectionately known as “the Alm”—short for *Almhütte*, the German word for “mountain hut”—was a place of gathering, wildlife watching, and quiet time together in nature

“My dad loved this land,” says Karin. “He built a small cabin up there, photographed the moose and their calves, and spent hours just watching wildlife move through the property. It was his happy place.”

When the family made the difficult decision to sell, they worried the place where they’d spent so much time together in nature might be permanently changed.

“We knew we didn’t want to see it developed or altered,” Karin says. “When BC Parks Foundation stepped in, we were absolutely thrilled. Knowing the land will stay as it is—and that future generations can experience it and enjoy it as we did—means everything to us. Maybe no one will remember us one day, but this land will always be here for people to enjoy.”

The protection of this inholding builds on decades of grassroots advocacy in the South Slopes, where local residents and volunteers worked persistently to protect the landscapes that eventually became Myra–Bellevue Park in 2001.

Friends of the South Slopes has long believed that conservation and low-impact, non-motorized recreation can coexist. This approach shaped the park’s creation and continues to guide its stewardship.

That legacy continues today through the partnership between Friends of the South Slopes and BC Parks Foundation, strengthening both biodiversity and public connection to nature, and ensuring places people rely on for physical and mental wellbeing remain intact as communities grow.

“People will always seek out nature,” Rick says. “When land is protected thoughtfully, with a light footprint, nature flourishes, and so do the people who rely on these places for their wellbeing.”

Karin and her partner Lisa on their horses, Link and Rollie. In the background, the log cabin (which no longer exists), affectionately referred to as “the Alm”.



BC Parks Foundation is the official charitable partner to BC Parks. We inspire and empower people to enjoy and protect BC’s parks and wildlife, ensuring these extraordinary places are cared for today and for generations to come. bcparksfoundation.ca

FOSS Trail Maintenance Update

In a normal year, the FOSS trail maintenance volunteers would be taking a break until early spring, but this isn't a 'normal' winter. The lower trails in Myra-Bellevue & Okanagan Mtn. were still snow-free at the end of January and some hardy volunteers were still out clearing windfalls.



Milt Stevenson, clearing a windfall on Myra Bailout Trail



Lorne Zimmerman



Alan Milnes clearing Wild Horse Canyon Trail in Okanagan Mtn.



BC Parks Is Installing New Trail Signs

Many of the trail signs in Myra-Bellevue Provincial Park are being updated by BC Parks with great information such as trail names (colour coded for 'degree of difficulty'), directional arrows, symbols for trail use, GPS location information and acknowledgement that we are on the unceded territory of the Syilx, Okanagan Peoples.

FOSS Marks Its 30th Anniversary

On February 29, 1996, FOSS was incorporated as a Registered Society in BC. February, 29, 2026 marks FOSS' 30th anniversary! To mark this important occasion,

FOSS is inviting all current and former directors to a celebration this spring. If this applies to you, please **'save the date' of Friday, May 8, 2pm-4:30pm**. We are compiling an invitation list and we will be contacting anyone who has been on FOSS' board of directors for at least one term. We have your names, but we'll likely need help obtaining your current contact information (phone numbers and e-mail addresses). You can help us out by sending us a message with this information to: foss30reunion@gmail.com

Your invitation will be e-mailed to you in March.



Muddy Trails!

This early season thaw makes for early season muddy trails. Please avoid riding (horses & bikes!) or hiking trails that are muddy.

- Riding in mud can create ruts and damage trails, requiring more maintenance work
- Muddy terrain can lead to slippery surfaces, increasing the risk of slips (horses), falls (hikers) and crashes (bikes)
- Riding in muddy conditions can contribute to soil erosion and other environmental issues
- Off trail riding or going around muddy patches can lead to trail braiding, causing unnecessary erosion
- If you're leaving deep ruts from tire tracks, hooves or footprints - the trail is too wet. Ruts can harden as the trail dries, making it unpleasant and unsafe for future trail users.



The FOSS Annual General Meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 14, 2026. Mark your calendar. A notice will be sent to FOSS members in March.

FOSS Social Media Reminder

FOSS is on Facebook and Instagram. Please 'follow' us at [FOSS-Kelowna](#) for up to date news.

(And who knew about the 'crunchy pillar ice' on the trails?
YOU WOULD if you followed FOSS on Facebook)



A Friendly Reminder to Dog Owners

In 2015, FOSS asked the BC Parks Area Supervisor to write an article for FOSS' Spring newsletter, outlining the BC Park position regarding dogs off-leash in our two local Provincial Parks. At that time, he reminded park visitors that the opportunity to enjoy these off-leash areas requires that dog owners be responsible for their pets. It's timely to re-post his message:

In Myra-Bellevue and Okanagan Mountain Provincial Parks, dog owners responsibilities include:

- *Ensuring your pet is under control at all times. This means your pet is within arm's reach of you and will return when called in all circumstances.*
- *Picking up after your pet. At the very least "stick and flick" your pet's waste off the trail.*
- *Not allowing your pets to harass wildlife. It is an offence under the **Wildlife Act** to allow your pet to chase and or harass wildlife.*
- *Not allowing your pet to harass other Park visitors. The Park is used by many user groups and if your pet is not well behaved around horses, cyclists, people or other dogs you should not allow your dog to be off-leash in the Park.*

Please help to ensure the Park continues to allow off-leash recreating with our four legged friends by being a responsible pet owner.

An added note to BC Parks' position on dog's off-leash is: As dog owners, we love our pets but not everyone is a 'dog person' and some people may be afraid of dogs. Also, some dogs are afraid of other dogs! Let's ensure that Myra-Bellevue remains an 'off-leash' area by keeping your dogs under your control at all times.

Volunteer Appreciation Night

In January, FOSS thanked its trail maintenance volunteers for their awesome efforts in 2025 by hosting a volunteer appreciation night at Barn Owl Brewery.

Also in attendance were Joe and Ben Vos, owners of Myra Canyon Bike Rental. They made a generous donation to FOSS in appreciation for the work FOSS volunteers do on the Myra Canyon Rail Trail. FOSS volunteers maintain the trail and have collaborated to develop the historic KVR work camps, Morrissey and Huissi, with more projects in the planning stage to showcase the history of the KVR.



L-R FOSS Director Milt Stevenson, Joe & Ben Vos (Myra Canyon Bike Rentals) and FOSS Director Alan Milnes.

In its January, 2026 newsletter, the Outdoor Recreation Council of BC (ORCBC) posted that Scott Walker of the **Back Country Horsemen of BC** (and a former ORCBC treasurer) has been named **Recreation Volunteer of the Year** by **Horse Council BC**, recognizing his longstanding dedication to trail stewardship and community service.

Congratulations from FOSS too! Scott and his wife are long time residents in South Kelowna and great supporters of FOSS.