



Bellevue Canyon (Photo Credit: Alan Milnes)

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

Thirty Years of Service! It's Worth Celebrating

FOSS was incorporated as a registered society in 1996, so 2026 marks our 30th anniversary.

On May 8th, 2026, we welcomed current and former directors and special guests to join us at an open house to commemorate this significant event. More than sixty guests enjoyed appetizers and beverages, an ongoing slideshow, and displays depicting FOSS' 30-year history.

Mayor Tom Dyas and Kelowna-Mission MLA Gavin Dew each spoke about the positive impact FOSS has had, and continues to have, in our community, maintaining and improving trails on Kelowna's South Slopes.

We welcomed guests from many of the community groups and nonprofits that FOSS works with, including Back Country Horsemen of BC, Central Okanagan Land Trust, Myra Canyon Trestle Restoration Society, Central Okanagan Search & Rescue, Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program, the mountain biking community, and BC Parks.

Many thanks to FOSS Director Rick Ellery, who chaired the 30th Anniversary Planning Committee, and (left to right in the photo) Jane Stevenson, Teresa MacKenzie, Penny Gubbels and Daphne Richard who told Rick "They'd look after it"and they did!





Mayor Tom Dyas

MLA Gavin Dew



Isabel Pritchard - FOSS' longest serving director, 23 years (1998-2020)

BC Parks Expands & Improves the Stewart Road East Trailhead (SRE)

THANK YOU to BC Parks for investing in Myra-Bellevue Provincial Park! In late April (and ahead of schedule) the new and improved parking lot at the SRE Trailhead reopened. Not only was it expanded to provide additional parking and dedicated spaces for horse trailers, but it has also been completely reconstructed, paved and parking lines were painted. In addition, the area around the information kiosk was expanded, leveled and gravel was spread. Three new picnic tables were installed, making this area a great place to gather. The pathway from the kiosk down to the parking lot was relocated, providing a much improved and safer merge to the parking lot. New pit toilets and garbage bins were installed. What a HUGE improvement! No more pot holes to navigate or clouds of dust.



Introducing Your 2026 FOSS Board of Directors

Keith Bepple*	Trail Maintenance Committee
Sarah Bendall*	Social Media
Hugh Culver	Chair, Promotion & Communications Committee
Rick Ellery	Chair, Strategic Relations Committee
Steve Hall	Board Secretary
Sandy Hilton	Treasurer
Cam Kourany	President, Chair of the Board
Alan Milnes	Chair, Special Projects Committee
Logan Pay	Promotion & Communications Committee
Doug Pearce*	Governance, Finance Committee
Cathy Richards*	Promotion & Communications Committee
Milt Stevenson	Chair, Trail Maintenance Committee

* Joining the board for 2026

Directors retiring from the Board were: Paula Levens (Promotion & Communications Committee), Amanda White (Promotion and Communications Committee) and Sharon Shepherd (Chair, Governance Committee).

The Friends of the South Slopes thank you, and our community thanks you!

FOSS Expands its Adopt a Trail Sponsorship Program

FOSS' Adopt a Trail Sponsorship Program launched in 2012, thanks to the efforts of former FOSS Director Ken Wiklund.

This year the program is being streamlined and improved. By adopting a trail in either Myra-Bellevue or Okanagan Mountain Provincial Parks, you will help to fund the FOSS trail maintenance program. Maintaining the trails you love is an expensive endeavour! Although FOSS volunteers do the grunt work to maintain and improve the trails, there are significant costs involved to support the trail maintenance program. Funds are needed to purchase, maintain and repair equipment, to buy fuel (costs that are rising significantly), to procure materials and pay for the insurance FOSS needs to carry for its volunteers, its equipment, and the trail maintenance depot.

As an Adopt a Trail Sponsor, you will have exclusive sponsorship of your trail and first rights for renewal next year. Your support is acknowledged with a custom 6"x6" trail marker on the sign posts at each end of your adopted trail and with prominent recognition the FOSS website and social media sites.

Sponsorship pricing is \$400 annually for lower trails in Myra-Bellevue or \$250 annually for upper trails.

Check [FOSS Adopt-a-Trail Program – Friends of the South Slopes](#) to see if your favourite trail is still available.



FOSS Directors Rick Ellery & Hugh Culver

FOSS Trail Maintenance Update:

Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park

In April, a dedicated crew of FOSS volunteers repaired trail damage along the Golden Mile Trail and they tackled a major upgrade to the Horse Creek Bridge, installing new, wider planking on the deck, and adding railings. The crew also improved the approaches to the bridge. This project improves safety for both trail users and FOSS' crews.



FOSS crew upgrading Horse Creek Bridge



Horse Creek Bridge

Myra-Bellevue Provincial Park (MBPP)

The Trail Maintenance Crews have dedicated most of their time this spring to the projects in Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park and the Myra Canyon Trestle Trail. In MBPP, volunteers have been primarily removing a record number of windfalls from the Crawford Trails section of the park. At the end of April, FOSS volunteers Correne, Brian, Mark and Alan spent a day on Hillbilly Trail above Race Classic, brushing and improving the sightlines.

Please report any trail issues to FOSS through the FOSS website <https://foss-kelowna.org>





Myra Canyon Trestles Trail

The Myra Canyon Explorer

Exciting news! FOSS has launched an interactive guide to points of interest in Myra Canyon. This guide has 21 points of interest highlighting the remarkable history of the KVR between Myra Station and Ruth Station. It will bring the Kettle Valley Railway experience to life - the bold

engineering, dramatic landscape and fascinating stories behind one of the Okanagan's most iconic experiences.

You can download the free guide and unlock the stories on your phone. The Myra Canyon Explorer is now live on the [FOSS website](#). Look for it in the menu bar.

The guide is also available to download at the Myra Station. FOSS is working on having the guide in French and German too!



Background: For nearly 30 years, the Myra Canyon Trestle Restoration Society (MCTRS) championed the restoration of the historic Myra Canyon Trestles. It played a major role in advocating for the rebuilding of the trestles that were destroyed during the 2003 Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park wildfire. Over time, the board's membership declined as they aged and sadly, some passed away. When the organization reached a point where it could no longer maintain the section of the KVR rail trail through Myra Canyon, it reached out to FOSS. In 2023 Friends of the South Slopes Society formally took over the MCTRS mandate to maintain and improve the Myra Canyon section of the Kettle Valley rail trail. Following this transition, FOSS entered into a series of discussions with BC Parks regarding the growing needs for the Myra Canyon section of Myra-Bellevue Provincial Park.

Concerns included the need for expanded parking, additional washroom facilities, ongoing trestle maintenance, and the removal of dangerous trees - work beyond the capacity of the FOSS volunteer crews alone. BC Parks listened, and the results are already visible. In 2024, BC Parks hired a contractor to redeck the trestles and they are now significantly safer. COSAR (Central Okanagan Search & Rescue) calls in the canyon dropped to zero last year. Additional washrooms have been installed, a new and larger parking lot has been opened and recent discussions with BC Parks have led to the implementation of a garbage collection program funded by Parks.



After taking over the MCTRS's responsibilities in 2023, FOSS crews have spent considerable time working in Myra Canyon. During that work, we realized that many important historical features in the canyon had become virtually unseen and rarely visited. Sites such as the water tower foundation, the rock over near Trestle 1, Ruth Station and the Morrissey and the Huissi work camps had largely faded from public awareness.

At the same time, FOSS board members were in regular contact with the Vos family, operators of Myra Canyon Bicycle Rental and Tours. Through these discussions, we learned that approximately 80% of visitors to Myra Canyon were unaware that the trail they were walking or cycling on had once been an active railway line. Many visitors simply wondered why there were so many "bridges". It became clear that the remarkable history of the Kettle Valley Railway was slowly fading from public memory.

The FOSS board began discussing ways to improve the visitor experience in Myra Canyon while bringing the extraordinary history of the KVR back to life. Conversations with local historians and experts including Maury Williams, Gord Hotchkiss, and Ian Pooley led us to consult published works by Maury Williams, Barrie Sanford, Joe Smuin, and Robert Turner which further enhanced these conversations and provided FOSS with significant material with which to work.

After extensive brainstorming and research, the board settled on the idea of creating a self-guided interpretive tour for Myra Canyon. The goal was to enhance the visitor experience by highlighting the engineering and construction of the tunnels, trestles, and rail bed through the canyon, while also recognizing those who's labour made this engineering marvel possible.

FOSS Directors Hugh Culver and Alan Milnes undertook the task of developing the guide—which recently launched as the **Myra Canyon Explorer**. Because the KVR is part of the Trans Canada Trail (TCT), FOSS applied for grant funding from the TCT during the winter of 2025. Our application was enthusiastically supported and approved. The TCT logo appears in the Myra Canyon Explorer Guide and on each of the Point of Interest signs - acknowledging their generous support.

Over the winter, the concept evolved. The completed guide is available as a downloadable PDF on the FOSS website. It includes a concise overview explaining why the KVR was built, who engineered the railway through Myra Canyon, who constructed it and how the workers lived while carrying out this extraordinary work. In addition, the guide features 21 points of interest throughout Myra Canyon, each offering visitors a deeper understanding of the canyon's history, engineering, and people.



FOSS Directors Alan Milnes & Hugh Culver

The FOSS board also recognized an opportunity to expand its Adopt-a-Trail program. Rather than sponsoring only trails, corporations and individuals now have the opportunity to sponsor one of the 21 interpretive pages featured in the guide. Given that Myra Canyon is the most visited tourist attraction in the Central Okanagan, attracting more than 100,000 visitors annually, the marketing potential for sponsors is significant. Sponsorship funds will help offset FOSS operating costs and support future special projects in Myra Canyon and throughout Myra-Bellevue Provincial Park.

Through the Myra Canyon Explorer, FOSS hopes not only to preserve the history of the Kettle Valley Railway, but also to create a richer, safer, and more meaningful experience for everyone who visits this extraordinary place.

